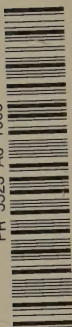




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J. SYMONDS AND HIS DAUGHTER - 1891

# JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS

## *A BIOGRAPHY*

COMPILED FROM HIS PAPERS AND CORRESPONDENCE

BY

HORATIO F. BROWN

WITH A FRONTISPIECE

*SECOND EDITION*

LONDON

SMITH, ELDER, & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE, S.W.

1908

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# PREFACE

BY MRS. SYMONDS

MR. HORATIO F. BROWN was, by my husband's will, left his literary executor, and in a few pathetic last words to me, written in a trembling hand on the last day of his short illness at Rome, when I, unhappily, was not by his side, he reminded me of this :

‘ROME, *April* 18, 1893.

‘There is something I ought to tell you, and being ill at Rome, I take this occasion. If I do not see you again in this life, you remember that I made H. F. Brown the depositary of my published books. I wish that legacy to cover all MSS., diaries, letters, and other matters found in my books, and cupboard, with the exception of business papers. . . . Brown will consult and publish nothing without your consent.—Ever yours,

‘J. A. SYMONDS.

‘You are ill at Venice, and I have fallen here.’

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To make a selection among this mass of written matter of all sorts has been a difficult task. No one could have brought to it more perfect knowledge, delicacy, and sympathy than the friend of twenty years, to whom my husband had written, in almost daily letters, all the various interests and problems with which his active brain was filled, and I am well satisfied that the portrait of him which the world will read should have been drawn by that faithful hand.

J. C. S.



# PREFACE

TO

## THE SECOND EDITION

MESSRS. SMITH, ELDER, & Co. having undertaken to publish a second edition of 'John Addington Symonds; a Biography,' in the same form as the other works of Symonds issued by that firm, it became my duty to revise the first edition in the light of the criticism it had received.

The chief objection taken by those who had met Symonds was that the portrait was too uniformly gloomy; that the brightness, the sparkle, the play of fancy, so characteristic of Symonds's conversation in genial company, found no place in this record of himself drawn from his autobiography, his diaries and his letters; that his power of feeding, stimulating, invigorating his hearers, his sympathetic *abandon* is missed. The most intimate friend of his school-days, the Rev. Gustavus Bosanquet, declares that Symonds, in his autobiography, 'gives an entirely wrong account of himself, describing himself as an unlovable, unclubable boy; he was anything but this. Gentle, bright, attractive, intelligent, he could not fail to be loved and admired by anyone who really knew him. But he was

not known.' The same criticism is applied to the portraiture of Symonds in his later years.

The charge has some justification, for undoubtedly Symonds was to those who knew him 'youthfully enthusiastic, enthusiastically youthful; generous, a nature of sweet human sunshine,' and imparted the *gusto* of life to all his conversation. But these conversations were never recorded, either by himself or by his friends, and even if they had been, it is to be feared that the atmosphere of their setting, and the personality of the speaker would have been wanting. Moreover, it was true that, as Stevenson notes in his 'Talk and Talkers,' in 'Opalstein's' conversation one always heard 'the barking of the Sphinx'; and Symonds himself, setting out, as he says, 'to be as truthful as mortal man may,' and 'aware that he alone possessed sources of information as to his own nature,' rendered this account of himself.

After going carefully through the material at my disposal I came to the conclusion that I at least could present no other portrait; and so this second edition differs in no essential outlines from the first.

H. F. B.

VENICE : October 5, 1903.

# PREFACE

TO

## THE FIRST EDITION

THE object which I proposed to myself in compiling this book was twofold. I desired, if possible, to present a portrait of a singular personality, and I hoped to be able to achieve this object mainly by allowing Symonds to speak for himself—to tell his own story. The book, in short, was to be as closely autobiographical as I could make it.

The material at my disposal was unusually abundant. I imagine that few men of letters have left behind them, in addition to some thirty published volumes, such a mass of letters, diaries, note-books, and memoranda as that which has passed through my hands.

This material is of two kinds—that which came into my possession under Symonds's will, and that which has been supplied to me by relations and friends. My own material consists of (1) diaries, introspective and emotional; (2) a series of note-books labelled *ἔργα καὶ ἡμέραι*, in which he recorded day by day such external facts as the books he read, the essays he wrote, the dinner parties which he gave or attended, the bare outlines of journeys which he took; (3) an autobiography;

(4) a miscellaneous collection of papers, including copies of many of his letters which Symonds himself reckoned important; and (5) the whole of his correspondence with me, which began in 1872, and was carried on most copiously and regularly down to the very last.

The material supplied to me by relations and friends consists of Symonds's voluminous correspondence with his sister Charlotte, Mrs. Green, with Mr. W. R. W. Stephens, with Mr. H. G. Dakyns, with Mr. Henry Sidgwick and Mr. Arthur Sidgwick, besides smaller collections of letters addressed to Mr. T. H. Warren, President of Magdalen College, Oxford, to Mrs. Ross, to Mr. Edmund Gosse (who also kindly procured me the use of the letters to Mr. R. L. Stevenson), to the Honourable Roden Noel, to Lord Ronald Gower, and to many others whose names will generally be found when letters to them are quoted. My thanks are due to all of these for so kindly allowing me to examine their correspondence. Miss Margaret Symonds has also written an account of her father's last journey, when she was, as she had often been, his companion. This is printed in the last chapter.

It may be asked why, as an autobiography exists, I have not confined myself to the publication of that. Apart from the ordinary and obvious reasons which render the immediate publication of autobiographies undesirable, there is a consideration supplied by Symonds himself, which induced me to adopt the course I have taken. 'Autobiographies written with a purpose,' he says in the autobiography itself, 'are likely to want atmosphere. A man, when he sits down to give an

account of his own life, from the point of view of art or of passion or of a particular action, is apt to make it appear as though he were nothing but an artist, nothing but a lover, or that the action he seeks to explain were the principal event in his existence. The report has to be supplemented in order that a true portrait may be painted.' Under the circumstances, it was possible from letters and diaries to furnish such supplement. Furthermore, I felt that autobiographies, being written at one period of life, inevitably convey the tone of that period; they are not contemporaneous evidence, and are therefore of inferior value to diaries and letters. To quote Symonds again, 'No autobiographical resumption of facts, after the lapse of twenty-five years, is equal in veracity to contemporary records.' For these reasons, then, I have used diaries and letters wherever that was possible; holding that they portray the man more truly at each moment, and progressively from moment to moment. But at certain places, notably at the very outset, the higher authorities, the letters and diaries, are wanting; and there I have been obliged to use the autobiography as supplying what no other authority 'could communicate with equal force.' I take the letters and diaries as soon as they appear; but as the autobiography was written towards the very end of Symonds's life, the reader can hardly fail to be aware of a break in style when passing from one source to the other, from autobiography to early letters and diaries. This, however, is a defect which becomes less and less sensible as the biography advances and Symonds's style begins to form itself. The auto-

biography being by far the best authority for the early years of his life, I thought it advisable to accept this slight drawback.

I must now say a word as to the method which I have pursued in compiling the biography from the materials described. As I have stated, I wished to leave Symonds to tell his own story, as far as that was possible, and at the same time I desired to construct a consecutive narrative and a current page, in order to avoid the awkward breaks which result from printing in the text the superscriptions, subscriptions, and dates of letters in full. It is hoped that in this way the reader may be enabled to read straight on; but should he at any time desire to know the source of the passage which he is reading—when that source is not already mentioned in the text—he will only have to look at the last footnote, and there he will find whether the quotation is from autobiography, diaries, or letters, and in the last case he will learn the superscription and date of the letter.

It was my desire to add as little of myself as might be; but I found, in the course of compilation, that it was impossible to disappear altogether from the page. All that I have to say, however, is marked off between square brackets, and when that includes quotations from Symonds these are given within inverted commas.

The biography of such a man as Symonds must depend for its interest upon psychological development. He was a man of means, and travelled for the sake of his health or for the accumulation of knowledge; but

his journeys were not of the kind which led to external adventures. For a biography of the psychological order, however, the material is rich and varied, as rich and varied as the temperament of the man who created it. The question is, what was the nature of that temperament? Is it possible to find a clue to the labyrinth of this complex human soul, laid bare with unflinching fidelity? Can we attain to a point of view which will embrace and also explain the varied and perplexing phenomena?

It is hard for a man to know himself. It is almost impossible for a friend, however intimate, to reach the inner truth of his friend's nature. But a biographer is in duty bound to form and to express some co-ordinating view upon the mass of material which he is giving to the world, and which in some way or other represents the man whose portrait he is seeking to delineate.

A nature so rich, a temperament so varied as that of Symonds, must inevitably have attracted by different qualities, and attached by various ligaments, his many friends; and no doubt each one of these would describe and explain the psychology of the man under slightly diverse aspects.

I can only say that the view I am about to put forward is one which I have held, more or less sub-consciously, ever since I became his friend in 1872; and that it has been forced home upon me with irresistible conviction during the compilation of this book.

I believe that, psychologically, Symonds was con-



structed thus: a highly analytical and sceptical intellect, with which was connected a profound sense of the one ultimate positive fact knowable to him — himself; a rich, sensuous, artistic temperament, with which was united a natural vein of sweetness and affection; an uncompromising addiction to truth, a passion for the absolute, a dislike of compromises, of middle terms, of the *à peu près*.

The central, the architectonic, quality of his nature was religious. By religious, I mean that his major occupation, his dominating pursuit, was the interrogation of the Universe, the search for God.

‘Theological’ his temperament certainly was not. He had arrived early at the conviction that the ‘theos’ about whom the current ‘logos’ was engaged must be a ‘theos’ apprehended, if not created, by the human intellect, therefore not the universal, all-embracing ‘theos’ for whom he was in search. ‘Religious,’ in so far as submission is implied by that term, he was not by nature, though I think he was being lessoned by life towards that issue. But if the honest, courageous recognition of the Self confronted with God, the soul with the universe, the struggle to comprehend and be comprehended, is religious, then Symonds was pre-eminently a religious man.

Emotionally he desired the warmth of a personal God, intellectually he could conceive that God under human attributes only, and found himself driven to say ‘no’ to each human presentment of Him.

I imagine that this is a temperament not altogether uncommon, that it is even characteristic, to some extent,



of our century, post-revolutionary and scientific; but I feel confident that the manifestation of such a temperament has seldom been so complete.

On such a psychological basis it would not in any case have been easy to construct a thoroughly happy or restful life. And when we take into consideration the burden of ill-health, and all the thwartings of a powerful, ambitious, and determined nature implied thereby, that note of depression which marks so many pages of diary, letters, and autobiography alike, will hardly cause surprise.

But it is no ignoble melancholy which overshadowed so large a part of Symonds's life. The passionate desire to reach God, to understand what we are, and why we are here, meeting with an equally powerful devotion to truth in its purest, simplest form, and equally potent resolve to accept no theory that is not absolute, final, larger than ourselves, inevitably produced a spiritual conflict, to witness which may make us sad, but can hardly fail to raise both respect and love for the soul which was its battle-field.

It is possible that many who met Symonds did not surmise behind the brilliant, audacious exterior, underlying the witty conversation, and the keen enjoyment of life and movement about him, this central core of spiritual pain. But the old adage is true—*παθήματα μαθήματα*—and I believe that he owed much of his singular charm, his attractiveness, his formative power over youthful character, his wide sympathy and his unfailing helpfulness, precisely to the pain, the bitterness, the violence of this internal struggle, which vivified

and made acutely sensitive a nature in its essence sweet and affectionate.

It must be remembered, however, that though this pain lay deep down at the root of his life, and finds expression where the man is speaking to himself, as it were, in diaries and letters to his most intimate friends, it did not obscure the sparkling genialities of his daily converse with the world, nor overlay the founts of human sympathy and kindness which welled up within his nature. I am sure that his intellectual equals would bear testimony to the brilliancy and vivacity of the personality which he presented to them. I am equally sure that the many to whom he brought material assistance would testify to the abundance of his philanthropy. '*Nemo te magis in corde amicos fovebat nec in simplices et indoctos benevolentior erat.*' His friend and teacher, the late Master of Balliol, wrote these words for his grave, and they are true.

I think that down to what Symonds always called 'the crisis' at Cannes, in the year 1868—that is, when he was twenty-eight years of age—this long internal struggle to know, and refusal to know in part, this unceasing interrogation of the Universe, had been conducted mainly in the field of abstract thought, by a continual cloud-war within the brain. After Cannes, and down to the close of his life, this inquiry was gradually removed from the region of the abstract to the region of the concrete; but the problem remained the same, the desire to solve it quite as potent. At times his philosophy of life may have appeared very positive, almost material, but that was merely because

the pure abstract had grown wearisome, not because the ideal point of view had been abandoned, the gravitation towards God arrested in its course. He seemed to me to be always studying, studying, studying; 'a terrible fellow for diving to the roots of things,' whether those things were the abstractions of the intellect or the concrete of daily life among the people with whom his lot was cast; in either field he was in pursuit of an answer to the riddle of existence, or, as he put it, 'living in the whole.' Moreover, it was only when abstractions were renounced that one large side of his nature was brought fully into play. His artistic, sensuous temperament found a satisfaction in actual life, which had been denied it in the cloud-land of speculation. The devotion to truth, the critical intellect, still maintained their old activity, but now more of the whole man became energetic, and he felt, and said he felt, wider, wiser, more humane—and on the whole happier.

I do not think that Symonds ever expected the problem to be solved, the struggle to be abandoned. The renunciation of the quest would have seemed to him spiritual death—the solution of the riddle, also, most likely, death. In December 1889, he wrote: 'When will the soul be at ease? If it has to live for ever, I believe mine will never be at ease.' Did he want it to be? I think so—but upon terms which we suppose to be precluded by the limitations of human nature, by the loss of its individual self-consciousness, by absorption into the Universal consciousness. 'E naufragar m'è dolce in questo mare.'

This is my view as to the central point in Symonds's

nature ; whether the present volume will carry to the reader the same conviction that the work of compiling them has strengthened in me, I cannot say. They are here to speak for themselves.

This volume has had the great advantage of revision by Symonds's family, and by two of his older friends, Mr. H. G. Dakyns and Mr. Henry Sidgwick. I can never sufficiently thank them for the patience and pains with which they have assisted me, in a task which I might otherwise have found to be even more difficult than it has proved.

HORATIO F. BROWN.

CA' TORRESELLA, VENICE :

*November 1894.*

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I<sup>1</sup> WAS born upon October 5, 1840, at 7 Berkeley Square, 1840  
Bristol. Here I lived until June 1851, when our home was  
changed for Clifton Hill House.

I cannot say that I have a distinct memory of my mother. She died of scarlet fever when I was four years old, and she had been always too weak in health to occupy herself energetically in the household. Those who knew her intimately were unanimous in saying that she combined rare grace and beauty of person with singular sweetness of character and distinguished mental endowments.

The one thing which I can clearly remember about her is, that we were driving alone together in my father’s carriage (a chariot with glass windows at the front and sides, drawn by two horses) down a steep hill by Cornwallis Terrace to the Lower Crescent, when the horses plunged and broke into a gallop. Her fright must have made a deep impression on me.

<sup>1</sup> Autobiography.

I can still see a pale face, a pink silk bonnet, and beautiful yellow hair. These have for background in my memory the glass windows of a *coupé*, and the red stone wall overhung with trees which embanked the garden of Cornwallis Terrace. I do not know now whether the road has been altered. It is long since I walked there. But the instantaneous flash of that moment on my brain persists as I describe it.

I can also remember the morning of my mother's funeral. We children were playing in our nursery with tin soldiers and clumsy wooden cannon, painted black and yellow. These were on the floor beside us. We were dressed in black. The nurses took us away to my grandmother's house in the Lower Crescent.

This is all I recollect about my mother. I have been told that my name was the last upon her lips when she was dying. But my father never spoke to me much about her, and only gave me a piece of her hair.

He sometimes took me with him to her grave. This was in the Arno Vale Cemetery, high up upon a grassy hillside, where harebells and thyme blossomed in the short turf of a down. A plane-tree spread its branches over the tomb, and the flat stone which marked her resting-place was enclosed by iron railings. My father took jealous care that these railings should be over-rioted with ivy, roses, and clematis, growing in unpruned luxuriance. He wished to withdraw the sacred spot from vulgar eyes. I could not see inside it. It was our custom to pluck leaves from the plane-tree and the creepers, and to return in silence to the carriage which stood waiting by the gate. These leaves, gathered from my mother's grave, were almost all I knew about her—all I had of her. I used to put them into a little book of texts called 'Daily Food,' which had belonged to her, and which I read every night, and still read at all hours of the day in the year 1889.

I cannot pretend that I greatly desired to have a clearer notion of my mother, or that I exactly felt the loss of her. It was all dreamy and misty to my mind. I did not even imagine what she might have been to me. Sometimes I thought that I was heartless and sinful because I could not want her much.

But this was foolish, because I had never really felt the touch of her. My father showed no outward signs of grief, and said nothing. He was only more than usually reserved on these occasions, and inspired me with a vague awe. Death was a mystery, into which the mother I had never really known was now for ever drawn away from me.

I doubt whether the following is worth recording. But 1842 since it is the first event of which I seem to have a distinct recollection, I must do so. My sister Charlotte, younger than myself by two years short of two months, was christened at St. George's Church, Bristol. So far as I can now recall it, the building is of pseudo Græco-Roman architecture, rectangular in the body, faced with a portico and surmounted with a nondescript Pecksniffian spire in the bastard classic style. Of its internal arrangement I remember nothing definite, and yet I seem to see this picture vividly—an area of building, dim, grey, almost empty; a few people grouped about in my immediate neighbourhood; tall enclosed pews of a light yellow colour round the groups; something going on at no great distance to our left, which makes the faces turn in that direction looking backwards; myself dressed in white, with a white hat and something blue in the trimmings of it, half standing, half supported, so as to look over the rim of the pew. This is what I remember, or think I remember, of my sister's christening.

It is surely impossible to be certain whether these very early memories, definite as they may be, and not improbable, are actual impressions of scenes left upon our senses, or whether they are not rather the product of some half-conscious act of the imagination working reflectively upon what has been related to the child.

About another of these recollections I have not the same kind of doubt. I was in the nave of Bristol Cathedral, during service time, lifted in my nurse's arms, and looking through the perforated doors of the organ screen, which then divided nave from choir. The organ was playing, and the choristers were singing. Some chord awoke in me then, which has gone on thrilling through my lifetime, and has been connected with

the deepest of my emotional experiences. Cathedrals, college-chapels, 'quires, and places where they sing,' resuscitate that mood of infancy. I know, when I am entering a stately and time-honoured English house of prayer, that I shall put this mood upon me like a garment. The voices of choiring men and boys, the sobbing antiphones and lark-like soaring of clear treble notes into the gloom of Gothic arches, the thunder of the labouring diapasons, stir in me old deep-centred innate sentiment.

So it is with another of my earliest experiences. When I was still a little child, my father began to take me with him on his long drives into the country. After jolting through the city streets, we broke away at his quick travelling-pace into unknown regions of field, and wood, and hedgerows, climbing the Somersetshire hills, threading their deep lanes and bosky combes, passing under avenues of ancient parks, halting at low-roofed farm-houses. Then I used to leave the carriage and wander for a while alone in fairyland—knee-deep in meadow-sweet and willow-herb, bruising the water-mint by shallow brooks, gazing at water-lilies out of reach on sleepy ponds, wondering why all about me was so still, and who the people were who dwelt there. The hush of sickness and expected death sobered the faces of the men and women who received my father; and he was often very thoughtful when he left their homesteads, and we journeyed back in silence. It used to be late in the evening generally when we returned from these excursions. Twilight added to the mystery of the unknown, the shadow of the unintelligible sorrow I had felt. The shimmer of moonlight blending with late sunset upon boughs of wild roses or spires of foxglove, or hyacinths in ferny hedges—a sallow western sky seen from the heathy heights of Mendip or of Dundry, the heavy scent of clematis or privet when the air is hot and moist in June, the grey front of lonely farm-buildings flanked by yew-trees, the perfume suddenly distilled from limes or laurels through darkness at some turning of the road—such things have always brought the feeling of those solemn evenings back. I used often to fall asleep in the carriage, and woke up startled by a carter's shout



as we swept onward, or by the glare of the city lamps, when we broke at last away from the country roads, and rattled over the pavement of the city streets.

I had no love for my birthplace, 7 Berkeley Square. I am distinctly aware of the depressing effect produced upon me by the more sordid portions of this town house, especially by a dingy dining-room, and a little closet leading through glass doors into a dusty back garden. The garden had one miracle, however, to ennoble it. That was a cherry-tree, which clothed itself in silver beauty once a year, maugre the squalor which surrounded it. I ought also not to forget, that our back windows looked out on Brandon Hill, from which a glorious prospect over city, river, meadow, distant hills and wooded slopes, could then be gained.

The front door of our house was fairly well proportioned, and surmounted with a pediment boldly hewn, of Bath-stone, grey and mossy. I felt a particular affection for this pediment. It had style. The limes and almond-trees and bright berries of the mountain ashes in the Square garden were also a great consolation. But certain annuals—*eschscholtzia*, *Virginia stock*, and *minor convolvulus*—have always remained unpleasantly associated with the forlorn ill-cared-for flower beds. I found some difficulty in conquering my dislike for the *nasturtium*, on account of the innumerable earwigs which its gorgeous trumpet-blooms concealed. On the other hand, certain dusky-green and brownish-pink hawk-moths, fluttering about the limes on summer evenings, seemed to me like angels from a distant land.

Trifling as these matters are, they indicate the spontaneous development of powerful instincts. My long exile in the High Alps has been rendered more than tolerable by the fact, that nothing which man makes can wholly debase the mountains of Graubünden. Simplicity and purity and wayward grace in natural things, strength and solidity and decent form in things of art, were what my temperament unconsciously demanded.

The sense of meanness which annoyed me in our house afflicted me far more keenly in the chapel of the Blind Asylum, where we attended service twice on Sundays. The bastard

Gothic lancets, dead-grey, rough-cast walls and ugly painted woodwork of that paltry building, gave me absolute pain. It suffocated my soul, and made me loathe evangelical Protestantism. Most of all, at night, when gas-lamps flared in open jets upon the sordid scene, I felt defrauded of some dimly apprehended birthright.

It is significant, in this respect, that two tales made a deep impression at this period on my mind. One was Andersen's story of the Ugly Duckling. I sympathised passionately with the poor bird swimming round and round the duck-pond. I cried convulsively when he flew away to join his beautiful wide-winged white brethren of the windy journeys and the lonely meads. Thousands of children have undoubtedly done the same; for it is a note of childhood, in souls destined for expansion, to feel solitary and debarred from privileges due to them. The other tale was a kind of allegory called 'The Story without an End,' translated, I think, by Lucy Duff Gordon from the German. The mystical dreamy communing with nature in wild woods and leafy places took my fancy, and begat a mood of *Sehnsucht* which became habitual.

My sisters and I were riding one day upon a rocking-horse which stood on the landing of the attic floor. I was holding on to the tail, I remember, a little anxious lest the tuft of grey horse-hair should suddenly give way and precipitate me backward, as it often did. We were screaming out Scott's lines upon the death of Marmion in chorus—

With dying hand, above his head,  
He shook the fragment of his blade,  
And shouted 'Victory!'—  
'Charge, Chester, charge! On, Stanley, on!'  
Were the last words of Marmion.

Suddenly I ceased to roar. A resolve had formed itself unbidden in my mind, 'When I grow up, I too will be an author.'

I was a very nervous child, and subject to many physical ailments, which made me no doubt disagreeable to the people around me. It seems that I suffered from a gastric fever soon after my birth, and this left me weak. Being sensitive to the



point of suspiciousness, I imagined that I inspired repugnance in others, and my own condition not unfrequently made me noisome to myself. My constitutional dislike of squalor had to suffer severe mortification. I became unreasonably shy and timid. In connection with these childish illnesses, and what follows about night terrors, it is proper here to say that I had an elder brother, John Abdy Stephenson, who only lived seven months, and died of cerebral inflammation. He had been preceded by twin-sons, premature and still-born. My elder sister Mary Isabella was born in 1837, the twins in 1838, John Abdy Stephenson in 1839, myself in 1840. There is every reason to suppose that my mother's constitution at this time was inadequate to the strain of child-birth, and that she transmitted a neurotic temperament to certain of her children.

At night I used to hear phantasmal noises, which blended terrifically with the caterwauling of cats upon the roof. I often lay awake for hours with my fingers in my ears.

I fancied there was a corpse in a coffin under my bed, and I used to wake up thinking it had risen, and was going to throw a sheet over me.

Lights seemed to move about the room if I opened my eyes in the dark. I feared them; but I was forced to stare and follow them about, until I either sank back hypnotised, or rushed from the bed, and sat in my nightshirt on the staircase. Yet I did not dread the dark so much as the light of a rush-candle burning in a perforated cylinder of japanned metal, which cast hideous patterns on the roof and walls of the nursery.

When I slept, I was frequently visited with the following nightmare. I dreamed that we were all seated in our well-lit drawing-room, when the door opened of itself, just enough to admit a little finger. The finger, disconnected from any hand, crept slowly into the room, and moved about through the air crooking its joints and beckoning. No one saw it but myself. What was the horror that would happen if it should touch me or any other person present, I never discovered, for I always woke before the catastrophe occurred.

My father, thinking, I suppose, that I needed to be looked

after, took me to sleep with him in his own bed. He added to my terrors by talking in his sleep. I remember one especially grim night, when I woke up and saw a man seated by the bed, and conversing with my father earnestly in a low voice about some case of fever. I did not miss a word, though all that I can now recall of the conversation related to the swollen blackness of the patient's tongue.

- 1847 In some way or another, perhaps by listening to the dismal sermons of the Blind Asylum, I developed a morbid sense of sin, and screamed at night about imaginary acts of disobedience. My aunt or my father, hearing me sob and cry, left their chairs in the drawing-room, and tried to reassure me. I can see him on one occasion entering the bedroom with a yellow pamphlet in his hand—a number of 'Vanity Fair,' which began to come out in January, 1847.

I was persuaded that the devil lived near the doormat, in a dark corner of the passage by my father's bedroom. I thought that he appeared to me there under the shape of a black shadow, scurrying about upon the ground, with the faintest indication of a swiftly whirling tail.

- 1848 When the cholera was raging in the year 1848, I heard so much about it that I fell into a chronic state of hysterical fear. Some one had told me of the blessings which attend ejaculatory prayers. So I kept perpetually mumbling, 'O God, save me from the cholera.' This superstitious habit clung to me for years. I believe that it obstructed the growth of sound ideas upon religion; but I cannot say that I was ever sincerely pious, or ever realised the language about God I heard and parroted.

Burglars entered my father's house in Berkeley Square one evening while a dinner-party was going forward. They carried off considerable booty from my aunt's and sisters' wardrobe and trinket-boxes. It appeared that they had worked their way through the attic-windows from an adjacent house, which was empty at the time. We could see the marks of their dirty clumsy hands upon the staircase wall next morning. I then made the mental reflection that people who were afraid of robbers could never have seen visions or dreamed nightmares.

These men did not affect my imagination disagreeably. So far as I thought about them at all, I sympathised with their audacity, and felt my curiosity aroused. Neither then nor afterwards did I fear anything so much as my own self. What that contained was a terror to me. Things of flesh and blood, brutal and murderous as they might be, could always be taken by the hand and fraternised with. They were men, and from men I did not shrink. I always felt a man might be my comrade. Dreams and visions exercised a far more potent spell. Night to them lay madness and utter impotence of self-control.

These childish terrors, of which I have written thus much, were stimulated by the talk of our head-nurse, Sarah Jones, a superstitious country woman. She was not exactly kind in her ways with us, and used to get drunk at times. Then she would behave strangely, and threaten us children. I lived in fear of her. Sarah's theory of discipline may be illustrated by the following anecdote. We were passing some weeks of the summer at an old inn on King's Weston Down—a very delightful place for children, with a swing suspended from the bough of a huge elm-tree, breezy downs where mushrooms grew and blackberries were plentiful, a farm-yard, an old park hard by, and shady copses of arbutus and juniper to wander in. Indoors the furniture was deficient; I found it difficult to fall asleep in a stiff arm-chair, covered with black horse-hair, and prolonged, I do not know how, into a make-shift for a bedstead. Sarah sat beside me working in the evening light, prodding the pillow and the mattress at intervals with her needle, under the impression that she could frighten me into slumber.

A very superior being to Sarah Jones was Mrs. Leaker, head-nurse in the family of my cousins the Nashes. She had much to do with fortifying and ennobling my sense of the supernatural. Mrs. Leaker had been born and bred in a Devonshire village on the sea-coast. She claimed gipsy-blood, and belonged to a family of smugglers, so at least she told us. Her physiognomy and complexion, and the legends with which her head was stored, accorded with this account of her ancestry.

She was a great reader of good literature, and had the plays of Shakespeare and the history of our old English wars by heart. Sitting round the nursery fire, we used to make her tell us stories; it was easy then to pass from Shakespeare and the landing of Monmouth in the West, to earlier traditions of the country-side—haunted churches, whose windows burned at night before a tempest; East Indiamen from Bristol firing distress guns in the offing; the parson leaving his pulpit, and the seamen stealing off to join the wreckers; the avenue to the old hall, up which a phantom lord rode in his chariot drawn by six black horses, holding his head upon his knee; the yeoman belated on Dartmoor, following a white rabbit, which disappeared when he arrived at home and found his only daughter dead in bed there; the wild carousings of smugglers in their caves, and murderous conflicts with coast-guardsmen; the wicked gentlemen who sat up days and nights at play, deep to their knees in scattered cards, losing fortunes, and sallying forth to exchange shots upon a Sunday morning. Ghosts naturally took a large place in these legends. But Mrs. Leaker had a special partiality for presentiments and warnings. She knew the dream of Lord Camelford before his duel, and the clasp of the fiery hand upon Lady Tyrone's wrist, and the bird which fluttered against the window of Lord Lyttelton at Hagley. Tales like these she related in the twilight with intense conviction of their truth, and with a highly artistic sense for the value of vagueness.

Our earliest memories of words, poems, works of art, have great value in our psychical development. They indicate decisive points in the growth of personality. The first English poem which impressed me deeply was Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis.' I read it before I was ten years old. It gave form, ideality, and beauty to my visions. I may mention some other literature which took hold on my imagination. We had a book of old ballads in two volumes, illustrated by Maclise and other draughtsmen. The pictures to 'Glenfinlas,' and 'Eve of St. John,' and 'Kempion,' made me feel uncomfortable, but I think that Marley's Ghost in one of Dickens' Christmas tales bit deeper. The most impressive

books of all were not illustrated. These were a series of articles on spectral illusions in 'Chambers's Miscellany,' and a translation of a German collection of murder stories by some name like Feuerbach. It is certain that I ought not to have had access to these scientific or semi-scientific sources. They worked potently and injuriously on my brain, but books abounded in our house, and I was naturally drawn to literature. I used even to examine the Atlases of Pathological Anatomy in my father's cupboards, and to regard the skeletons of man and beast with awful joy.

The family consisted of my father, my aunt, Miss Mary Ann Sykes, and my three sisters, Edith, Mary Isabella, and Charlotte. I cannot recollect any bond of friendship between me and my sisters, though we all lived together in amity. One touch of sympathy drew me closer to Maribella than the others. When I began to learn arithmetic I could not understand the simplest sums. She noticed me crying over a sum in long division, and with great gentleness and kindness helped me through the task.

We used to go to children's parties together. On these occasions I was reputed to have brought some confusion on my elder sisters. Once, when I thought I was being neglected at table, I pointed to a cake, and said, 'I never ask, but I points.' At another party, impatient of waiting for supper, I asked the mistress of the house, 'Lady, when are you going to help?'

My grandmother, Sykes, played a considerable part in our young lives. She was a handsome old lady with strongly marked features, and a great air of blood and breeding. This contrasted strangely with her material and social surroundings. She had become a Plymouth Sister, and held the most innocent amenities of life for sinful. Her house in Cornwallis Crescent, or the Lower Crescent, had nothing in it to rejoice the eye, except flowers, to which she was devoted. Yet it never impressed me with a sense of squalor. The perfume of pot-pourri in a blue china bowl, and of Tonquin beans exhaling from drawers and work-baskets, gave distinction to the rooms, and the old lady's stately person rendered it



impossible to regard any of her possessions as beneath the dignity of a gentlewoman. Nevertheless, all objects of taste and luxury, all that delights the sense, had been carefully weeded out of the grim, bare dwelling. And what company my grandmother kept! It was a motley crew of preachers and missionaries, trades-people and cripples—the women dressed in rusty bombazine and drab gingham—the men attired in greasy black suits, with dingy white neckties—all gifted with a sanctimonious snuffle, all blessed by nature with shiny foreheads and clammy hands, all avid for buttered toast and muffins, all fawning on the well-connected gentlewoman, whose wealth, though moderate, possessed considerable attractions, and was freely drawn upon.

I often went to stay with my grandmother when circumstances, generally some infectious ailment in our nursery, made it desirable that I should be away from home. So I had plenty of opportunities for studying these strange people, and appreciating the marvellous figure which that formidable old lady, aristocratic to the backbone and terribly ill-tempered, cut among them.

Heavy teas, like those described by Dickens, were of frequent occurrence, after which the Chadband of the evening discoursed at a considerable length. Then followed prayers, in the course of which a particularly repulsive pharmaceutical chemist from Broad Mead uplifted his nasal voice in petitions to the Almighty, which too often, alas, degenerated into glorifications of the Plymouth sect at Bristol, and objurgations on the perversity of other religious bodies. My grandmother came in for her due share of fulsome flattery, under the attributes of Deborah and Dorcas. My father was compared to Naaman, who refused to bathe in Jordan—Jordan being Bethesda, or the meeting-house of the Plymouth Brethren.

Sometimes I was taken to Bethesda, a doleful place, which brought no healing to my soul, but seemed to me a pool of stagnant pietism, and turbid middle-class Philistinism. This chapel did not, however, afflict me so grievously as the Blind Asylum. Partly, perhaps, because I knew it less, and it always had a kind of novelty. Partly because nothing which

my grandmother touched was wholly common-place or sordid. I think, too, that I was even then capable of appreciating the ardent faith and powerful intellect of George Müller, who preached there, and who founded the celebrated Orphanage at Horfield, near Bristol.

My grandmother naturally made a strong point of family prayers. She delighted in the Lamentations of Jeremiah, the minatory chapters of the prophets, and the Apocalypse. In a deep, sonorous voice, starting with a groan and rising to a quaver, she used to chant forth those lugubrious verses, which began or ended with 'Thus saith the Lord.' I remember hearing nothing of the Gospel, or the love of Christ for the whole human race, either in her readings from Scripture or in the extempore prayers which followed. She concentrated her attention on the message to the chosen people, with a tacit assumption that all who lived outside the Plymouth fold were children of wrath.

She had one redeeming quality of great price. That was her love of flowers. The public garden of the Lower Crescent flourished under her assiduous care; and the small plot therein which was her own particular property abounded with old-fashioned plants—grape hyacinths and double primroses, auriculas and polyanthuses and oxlips, pyrus japonicus and ribes and gum cistus, with its papery stained petals, heavy-scented jessamine, and burly cabbage-roses.

My grandmother was a thorough Abdy, subject to chronic insomnia, and irritable to the highest degree. She lived alone with two servants, in a tolerably large four-storied house. She slept upon the second floor, and no one was allowed to inhabit the third. When I was there I occupied a bedroom next the drawing-room, on the first floor. There was no living creature except a cat and cockroaches in the house below me. Between me and the servants slept the imposing old lady in her solitude, and the whole habitation during the long night hours resounded to my fancy with the doleful litany of 'Thus saith the Lord: Woe, woe to the ungodly.' It may be imagined how prolific of nightmares No. 14 Lower Crescent was for me.



Some of my father's relatives were settled in Bristol, Clifton, and the neighbourhood. I will now narrate what seems to me at all noteworthy regarding my paternal kith. They were excellent folk, distinguished by the virtues of the backbone of the English nation—the great middle class. They also shared its faults—faults inseparable from a Nonconformist ancestry of several generations, complicated by ineradicable family pride. How this pride had formed itself, I am incapable of saying. They knew little about what is really interesting in their genealogy. A tradition survived of ancient gentry, sacrificed to a religious and political creed. They were proud of being members of a family which had relinquished the world and dedicated all its energies during two centuries to the maintenance of an ideal. How narrow the ideal was, and how inconsistent with the progress of modern thought it had become, they did not stop to consider.

My father was a *rara avis* in this family. They looked upon him with suspicion, modified by respect and admiration. Intellectually he had joined the ranks of progress, and belonged to the age of widening thought. Morally he held with them, and exemplified in his own life what was best and noblest in the family tradition. To keep himself unspotted by the world, to admit no transaction with base motives, to live purely and act uprightly, to follow honour, to postpone mundane and selfish interests to duty, to deal mercifully, sympathetically, tenderly, justly with his brother men, to be unsparing in condemnation of rebellious evil, painstaking and long-suffering with struggling good, these were the principles which ruled his conduct. He transfigured in himself the inheritance he had derived from six generations of Puritan ancestors, and he retained something of their rigidity. But he also felt the influence of the age in which he lived. He was open at all pores to culture, to art, to archæology, to science, to literature. In a large and liberal sense, he yielded his spirit up to beauty, and imbibed the well-springs of modern philosophy. Judged by the narrow standard of his kindred, he was unsound on doctrine, dangerously allied with the revolutionary forces of the century. They not unnaturally regarded him as a bird of

different feather from themselves ; and, while they looked up to him as the mainstay of their fortunes, the most eminent example of the vigour of their race, they felt a certain aloofness from this eagle born in the hencoop.

A son cannot speak adequately about his father. There is a certain impiety in formulating sentences about the author of our being and the moulder of our character ; though I cannot express the truth of what I feel, it is possible for me to state the mature opinion that my father typified an exceptionally interesting moment of English evolution. He had abandoned the narrow standpoint of Nonconformist or Evangelical orthodoxy, but he retained what was ethically valuable in the religious tradition. He opened his mind to every influence of knowledge and of culture. He relinquished nothing which affected character and principle. In this way he formed a link between the past and the future, attaining to an almost perfect harmony of conservative and liberal ideas. I, the product of a younger period, regard his attitude with reverent admiration. I have been unable to preserve the equilibrium which he maintained, and which appears to me the flower of human virtue. He helped to liberate my spirit, and, starting from the point which he reached, I have been carried further, not so wisely, not to a result so mellow, so morally and æsthetically beautiful. We dare not regret the inevitable, we are impotent to strive with fate. What I am, is what I had to be. But these reflections do not prevent me from recording the conviction that my father was a man of plastically noble character—plastic in the sense ascribed by Hegel to that word—all functions of his nature meeting in a well-strung symphony which made the powerful yet kindly-tempered personality he had.

His constitution favoured him, perhaps. The serious obligations of his life, the duty of working for his family, helped him. And it must not be forgotten that his self-emancipation from the narrowing conditions of his earlier environment, absorbed a large part of his energy. This is no deduction from his merit. It only serves to show how natural bias and circumstance contributed to make him the fine

specimen of English manhood, in the second half of the nineteenth century, which he became.

How I, the son of such a father, came to be what I am, is a problem I must leave to Francis Galton and the students of heredity. Of my propensities, of my sensibilities, of my audacities, he had no share. They were inborn in me.

Two of his near relatives had helped to form my father's character ; these were his own father and his great-uncle, Dr. John Addington, a courtly and stately old gentleman, who lived at Ashley Court on the northern side of Bristol. It was mainly by Dr. Addington's advice that my father settled in that city. Dr. Addington belonged to the small school of advanced thinkers who formed themselves in England on the type of the French philosophers and Hume and Hartley. He boasted of having been present at the Bastille dinner. He was a friend of Rammohoun Roy. He corresponded with the leading Liberals in politics, religion, and philosophy. His carriage, conversation, and deportment combined aristocratic hauteur with the sarcastic wit and frankness of expression which characterised professed freethinkers at the beginning of the nineteenth century. This was remarkable in the case of a man whose father was a non-juror and Nonconformist minister, who claimed kinship with Lord Sidmouth, and who had acquired a moderate fortune by the practice of medicine in London. He had no children ; and after his decease this branch of the Addington family was represented by my father.

The gradual emergence from narrow intellectual conditions in a Puritan pedigree is always interesting. We see the process going forward in the case of Quakers, and of Dissenters who have acquired importance at the present time. The annals of my own family furnish an excellent example. When I broke up our home on Clifton Hill in 1881, I deliberately burned the correspondence of five generations—that is to say, the letters of my grandfather and of his immediate ancestors through four descents. I had two good reasons at the time for doing this. One was that I did not know where to deposit these bulky documents, some of which contained matters too

personal for publication or for transference to any public library. The other was that the perusal of them left a deeply painful impression on my mind. The intense pre-occupation with so-called spiritual interests; the suffocating atmosphere of a narrow sect resembling that of a close parlour; the grim, stern dealing with young souls not properly convinced of sin; the unnatural admixture of this other-worldliness with mundane marrying and giving in marriage and professional affairs, caught me by the throat and throttled me. I could not bear to think that my own kith and kin, the men and women who had made me, lived in this haunted chamber, from which 'eternity's sunrise,' the flooding radiance of Nature's light, seemed ruthlessly excluded. So I committed an act of vandalism, whereof I am now half-repentant and half-proud. No doubt those documents, carefully sifted by successive members of the family from other papers of less moment in their eyes, epitomised the spiritual archives of a race who scorned their ancient or decaying gentry, and who boasted—I remember the phrase in one of those letters—that they had been 'renowned for their piety through two centuries.' This, by the way, was written by the head of the family about 1830 to one of its younger members, who innocently asked for information about such insignificant trifles as Sir Richard Fitz-Simon, K.G., temp. Edward III., and the quartering of Mainwaring. He was told that seats and crowns in the heavenly Jerusalem had far more value, and were far more difficult to win, than coronets or garters bestowed by kings, or than arms inscribed upon the heralds' books by Clarencieux. An undoubted truth. The man who penned those sentences of scornful rebuke displayed no ignoble pride. Yet he was proud and stubborn to the backbone in his unworldliness; and if I have any grit in me, I owe it to this proud humility of my forefathers.

This brings me to speak of my grandfather, John Symonds of Oxford, who was the first to react against the hereditary narrowness of the family creed. Remaining a Dissenter, he became in mature life what may best be described as a Christian Stoic. He was a good Latin scholar, and wrote

voluminous diaries and meditations in the style of Seneca. Not an elastic or optimistic nature—on the contrary, rigid and circumscribed, depressed by a melancholy temperament and by the gloom of Calvinism, which assumed in him the form of philosophical fatalism. This comparative disengagement from sectarian doctrine, combined with the study of the classics and of English thought—from Bacon through Locke to Hume and Adam Smith—formed a type of character well calculated to start my father upon his own path of emancipation. A severe uncompromising sense of duty, a grim incapability of any transactions with the world, marked my grandfather out as the lineal and loyal descendant of his Puritan ancestors. These moral qualities were transmitted to my father. In my father they became transfigured and spiritualised. The advanced ground reached by my father was the soil in which I grew up. These three generations of men—my grandfather, my father, and myself—correspond to the succession of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, to the transition from early pointed Gothic, through Decorated, to Flamboyant architecture. *Medio tutissimus ibis*. The middle term of such series is always superior to the first, and vastly superior to the third. How immeasurably superior my father was to me—as a man, as a character, as a social being, as a mind—I feel, but I cannot express.

My grandfather left Oxford and came to live with his daughter, Mrs. James Nash, at Cossington Villa, Clifton. He soon proposed to teach me Latin. I began to learn this language before I was five years old, and can remember declining some Latin nouns to my father on my fifth birthday. It was rather a long walk for a little boy from Berkeley Square to Cossington Villa, which stood in its own garden not far from Buckingham Chapel.

The grammar used for instructing me in Latin was, so far as I can remember, one by Arnold. When we came to the doctrine of the potential and subjunctive moods, I could not comprehend the rules, and refused to learn them by rote. Considering that I was an extremely docile and timid child, this argued an extraordinary amount of intellectual repugnance.



My grandfather declared that he would not teach me any more ; I was incorrigibly stupid or obstinate. I had to write an apologetical letter, which I remember doing with mighty solemnity and sense of importance, propped up on cushions at a big high table. On these conditions he took me back as a dull but repentant pupil.

The difficulty of grasping abstract statements made learning very irksome to me. Some branches of knowledge I wholly failed to acquire. Among these was arithmetic. I could not do the sums, because the rules, which were never properly explained, oppressed me with a nightmare sense of unreality. Even when I got hold enough upon them to apply them, I was sceptical about the result. The whole process seemed to me like a piece of jugglery, which offended my intelligence. Euclid, on the other hand, offered no obstacles. Geometry gave me pleasure by its definite objectivity, clear chains of reasoning, and direct appeal to the senses. I could remember the figures, and work a theme or problem out with ease. I always learned best through the eyes, and I am convinced that a tutor who discerned this bias in me for the concrete could have taught me anything in mathematics.

As time went on, I used to take country walks with my grandfather and cousins. What he told me then—the names of plants, and the Latin words for things we saw—I have never forgotten.

During our excursions on the Downs, nature began to influence my imagination in a peculiar way. When the light of evening was falling, or when we found ourselves in some secluded corner, with a prospect toward the Bristol Channel and the Welsh hills, I passed from the sense of a tangible present into a dream. This was a very definite phase of experience, approaching hypnotism in its character. I partly dreaded the subjugation of my conscious will, and partly looked forward to it with a thrill of exquisite anticipation. I learned to recognise the symptoms of this on-coming mood. But I could not induce it by an act of volition. It needed some specific touch of the external world upon my sensibility.

I am not sure whether this was the rudimentary stage of

another form of self-absorption, which afterwards, for many years, recurred at intervals, giving me more of serious disturbance than of pleasure when it came. That was a kind of trance. Suddenly, at church, or in company, or when I was reading, and always, I think, when my muscles were at rest, I felt the approach of the mood. Irresistibly it took possession of my mind and will, lasted what seemed an eternity, and disappeared in a series of rapid sensations, which resembled the awakening from anæsthetic influence. One reason why I disliked this kind of trance was that I could not describe it to myself. I cannot even now find words to render it intelligible, though it is probable that many readers of these pages will recognise the state in question. It consisted in a gradual but swiftly progressive obliteration of space, time, sensation, and the multitudinous factors of experience which seemed to qualify what we are pleased to call ourself. In proportion, as these conditions of ordinary consciousness were subtracted, the sense of an underlying or essential consciousness acquired intensity. At last nothing remained but a pure, absolute, abstract self. The universe became without form and void of content. But self persisted, formidable in its vivid keenness, feeling the most poignant doubt about reality, ready, as it seemed, to find existence break as breaks a bubble round about it. And what then? The apprehension of a coming dissolution, the grim conviction that this state was the last state of the conscious self, the sense that I had followed the last thread of being to the verge of the abyss, and had arrived at demonstration of eternal Maya or illusion, stirred or seemed to stir me up again. The return to ordinary conditions of sentient existence began by my first recovering the power of touch, and then by the gradual though rapid influx of familiar impressions and diurnal interests. At last I felt myself once more a human being; and though the riddle of what is meant by life remained unsolved, I was thankful for this return from the abyss—this deliverance from so awful an initiation into the mysteries of scepticism.

This trance recurred with diminishing frequency until I reached the age of twenty-eight. Though I have felt its



approaches often, I have not experienced it fully now for many years. It served to impress upon my growing nature the phantasmal unreality of all the circumstances which contribute to a merely phenomenal consciousness. Often have I asked myself with anguish, on waking from that formless state of denuded, keenly sentient being, which is the unreality?—the trance of fiery, vacant, apprehensive sceptical self from which I issue, or these surrounding phenomena and habits which veil that inner self and build a self of flesh-and-blood conventionality? Again, are men the factors of some dream, the dream-like unsubstantiality of which they comprehend at such eventful moments? What would happen if the final stage of the trance were reached?—if, after the abduction of phenomenal conditions beyond recovery, the denuded sense of self should pass away in a paroxysm of doubt? Would that be death and entire annihilation? Would it be absorption into the real life beyond phenomena? Could another garment of sensitive experience clothe again that germ of self which recognised the unsubstantiality of all that seemed to make it human?

It is obvious that I am straining the resources of language at my disposal in the effort to adumbrate the exact nature of this trance. I find it impossible, however, to render an adequate account of the initiation. Nor can I properly describe the permanent effect produced upon my mind by the contrast between this exceptional condition of my consciousness and the daily experiences—physical, moral, intellectual, emotional, practical—with which I compared it. Like other psychical states, it lies beyond the province of language.

When I first read Pindar, his exclamation—

*ἐπάμεροι· τί δέ τις; τί δ' οὐ τις; σκιᾶς ὄναρ ἄνθρωπος—*

‘Things of a day. What is a man? What is a man not?  
A dream about a shadow is man’—

awoke in me reverberating echoes. This was for me no casual poet’s question, no figure of rhetoric let fall to point the moral of man’s fleeting day on earth. The lyric cry pierced to the very core and marrow of my soul.

When I was eight years old, my father sent me to a tutor,

the Rev. William Knight. This gentleman kept a school. His house in Buckingham Villas (now part of the Pembroke Road) was at least a mile from Berkeley Square. I used to perform the journey, going and coming, four times in a working day. The institution was probably not worse than the majority of private schools. How bad it was I dare not say. Mr. Knight had little to do with the teaching. The boys—several of them sons of Somersetshire gentlemen, others like me, day scholars—did pretty much as they liked. Bullying of a peculiarly offensive sort took place there. But I am bound to say that I was neither bullied nor contaminated in my morals. I think that Mr. Knight, owing special obligations to my father, insisted on my being treated with more consideration than the other pupils.

It was rather a *via dolorosa* from Berkeley Square to Buckingham Villas. The road led through a street of poor people, among whom I became interested in a family of mulattoes, the children of a negro sailor and a Bristol woman. A narrow alley led to the Roman Catholic Church, then half finished; and this alley was always adorned on both sides with obscene or blasphemous *graffiti*. Emerging at the top, I passed through some dismal, decaying terraces and villas, and then took a straight line along decent dwelling-houses, with a great field on the right hand, until I eventually arrived at the school. The whole line of march recurs to my mind's eye; but I am characteristically oblivious of the names of places.

Just before I reached Buckingham Villas there was a tall house on the right, cresting the rising slope, and looking down upon the large field I have mentioned. I think it was also called Buckingham something. There was a grating in the basement floor of this house, which gave light to a cellar of some sort. I fancied that a magician lived in the semi-subterranean apartment. I used to see him squatting by a fire upon the floor, raking up embers, and stirring ingredients in a caldron. He became a positive reality to my imagination, but I never attempted to converse with him, and did not feel sure whether he was a wizard or an alchemist. The alternative puzzled me.

About this figment of my fancy I spoke freely at home, and proposed to take my sisters to watch the magician at work. My aunt, however, looked seriously on the matter, and requested me not to tell lies. The same thing happened when I arrived one evening in a state of considerable excitement at home, and declared that I had been attacked by robbers on the way. The artlessness of my narration must have proved its worthlessness. I was soundly scolded. Yet neither the magician nor the robber are less real to my memory than most of the people who surrounded me at that time. It was right to treat me harshly about such waking dreams. I learned in this way to distinguish what we call true from what we call false.

To my father I owe a debt of gratitude for his sympathetic treatment of quite a different occurrence. I sold my Latin Dictionary to a comrade called Emerson for sixpence. When I was asked at home where I had lost it, I said that I did not know. Stings of conscience made me speedily confess the truth, and I did so with no little trepidation to my father in his library. He spoke gently and wisely on the topic, pointing out that lies were not only wrong but ignoble. What he then said touched my sense of honour, and struck my intelligence. I was thenceforward scrupulous about telling the exact truth.

The occurrences I have recently related seem to me important in the development of my character. They saved me from becoming a visionary, to which I was too prone by temperament. They forced me to draw a sharp line of distinction between what happened in my dreaming self and what impinged upon my senses from outside. They revealed the all-importance of veracity—the duty and the practical utility of standing on a common ground of fact with average men and women in affairs of life. In other words, I became capable of discriminating between fancies and things, and I learned to abhor and scorn mendacity.

## CHAPTER II

## BOYHOOD

Change to Clifton Hill House—Home life—Evening readings—Clifton described—Its effect upon his growth—Early education—At his tutor's—Learns Greek—Composes English verses—The legend of Apollo—Boyish games—Illness—Sent to Torquay—Fishing for seaweed—His governess, Mdlle. Girard—Sleep-walking—Recurrent dreams—Early perceptions of beauty—Greek statuary and picture-books—Landscape—Love of Nature—Mr. Vigor's portrait—Sensitiveness—His psychical condition—Mdlle. Girard's account of him.

UP<sup>1</sup> to this point I have recorded memories of my life before the age of ten, admitting only those which can be referred by some clear local indication to that period. I now pass from childhood to the first period of boyhood. The transition is defined by the change of residence from 7 Berkeley Square to Clifton Hill House.

1851 This stage, which extended from June 1851 until May 1854, was one of greatly increased happiness. My health improved. We were nearer the country, and our new house satisfied my sense of what is beautiful. I had a pony and began to ride. This I enjoyed, though I did not become a good horseman, mainly, I think, because I was allowed to go out riding alone before I had been trained by a groom.

My youngest sister Charlotte and I became great friends; and we both profited by the companionship of her governess, Mdlle. Sophie Girard, of whom I shall have more to say. We three formed a little coterie within the household.

Hitherto, so far as people were concerned, my inner life had been almost a blank.

<sup>1</sup> Autobiography.

It is a great misfortune for a boy to lose his mother so early as I did ; and my father was so busy in his profession that he had very little time to bestow on me. Yet even in my childhood his strong and noble character, his sense of honour and duty, and his untiring energy impressed me. The drives I took with him were not thrown away. In the evenings also, when he had a spare hour, he used to read to us, choosing ballads, portions of Scott's poems, passages from Hood's 'Miss Kilmansegg,' stories from Hans Andersen, adapted to our intelligence. These readings stimulated my literary instincts.

So far as my father was concerned, I grew up in an atmosphere of moral tension, and came to regard work as the imperative duty imposed on human beings.

It was a great day for all of us when my father announced, on one June morning, that he had bought Clifton Hill House, and drove us in his carriage to visit our future home.

This house had been built by a Bristol merchant named Paul Fisher. It carries on its garden front the date 1747, together with the coat of Fisher empaling what other arms I know not. Paul Fisher himself sleeps in Clifton churchyard, and the vestibule to what is now the parish church contains his defrauded and neglected monument.

At the time when this substantial piece of early Georgian architecture was erected Clifton still remained a country village. Paul Fisher's habitation had no rivals in antiquity but the Church House and the Manor House, none in stateliness except the fine suburban villa of the Goldney family. At this period—a period anterior to 'Humphrey Clinker' and 'Evelina,' novels which have made the Hot Wells of Clifton famous in literature—Bristol merchants had begun to plant a few rare mansions in the immediate neighbourhood of the city, while the overflow of Bath fashion crowded the incommodious lodgings which nestled beneath St. Vincent's rock upon the sheltered banks of Avon.

In those days Clifton must have been beautiful and wild indeed. The few houses of the gentry clustered around the humble village church—not that ugly building which now perpetuates the bad taste of the incipient Gothic revival, the



dismal piety of the Simeon trustees—but a rustic West of England chapel, with narrow windows and low sloping roof. Grass-fields spread around this church, open to clear heavens and pure breezes from the Bristol Channel. The meadows merged in heathy downs, stretching along the Avon at the height of some three hundred feet above the water, until the land again broke into copse and pasture, sweeping with gentle crests and undulations to the estuary of the Severn.

At a considerable distance below the village slept the great city, which, next to London, was still at that epoch the most important town in England. Bristol stands at the junction of the rivers Frome and Avon, which from this point flow together through a winding defile of high limestone cliffs to the Severn. Sea-waters from the channel washed its walls, and tided merchant vessels to the quays of antique commerce. They brought with them the sugar and the spices, the tobacco and rare timber of Virginia and the Indies, to be stored in the warehouses of the city wharves. When Paul Fisher gazed from the windows of his new-built mansion over an expanse of verdure, he saw the streets and squares of the red-roofed town threaded with glittering water-ways, along which lay ocean-going ships, their tall masts vying with the spires and towers of clustered churches. St. Mary de Redclyffe's broken spire, the square tower of the cathedral (that old Abbey Church of the Augustine monks, enriched by Barons of Berkeley Castle), the sharp shaft of St. Nicholas, the slender column of St. Stephen, surveyed from the altitude of Clifton Hill, were all embedded in groves of limes and elms and masts with pennons waving from the top.

Clifton|Hill House, at the present day, turns a grim grey frontage to the road. It is a ponderous square mansion, built for perpetuity, with walls three feet in thickness, faced with smooth Bath stone. But, passing to the southern side, one still enjoys the wonderful prospect which I have described. Time has done much to spoil the landscape. Mean dwellings have clustered round the base of Brandon Hill, and crept along the slopes of Clifton. The city has extended on the further side towards Bedminster. Factory chimneys, with their filth

and smoke, have saddened the simple beauty of the town and dulled the brightness of its air. But the grand features of Nature remain. The rolling line of hills from Lansdown over Bath, through Dundry, with its solitary church-tower, to Ashton guarding the gorge of Avon, presents a free and noble space for cloud shadows, a splendid scene for the display of sunrise. The water from the Severn still daily floods the river-beds of Frome and Avon ; and the ships still come to roost, like ocean-birds, beside the ancient churches. Moreover, the trees which Paul Fisher planted in his pleasaunce have grown to a great height, so that a sea of many-coloured foliage waves beneath the windows of his dwelling-house.

On that eventful June morning, I entered the solemn front door, traversed the echoing hall, vaulted and floored with solid stone, and emerged upon the garden at the further end. An Italian double flight of balustraded steps, largely designed, gives access to the gravelled terrace which separates the house from the lawn. For us it was like passing from the prose of fact into the poetry of fairyland.

The garden, laid out by Paul Fisher in 1747, had not been altered in any important particular, except that a large piece of it was cut away at the bottom to build a row of houses called Bellevue Terrace. Four great tulip-trees, covered with golden blossoms, met our eyes at four points of vantage in the scheme. Between them, on either hand, rose two gigantic copper-beeches, richly contrasted with the bright green of the tulip-trees. Eight majestic elms, four on each side, guarded the terrace. They dated from an older period than the foundation of the dwelling-house. The grove, which clustered round the central grass-plot, was further diversified by ilexes and mulberry trees, wych-elms and pear trees, a fragile ailanthus and a feathery acacia, with cypresses from the black boughs of which the clambering roses fell in showers. Sycamores, beeches, and walnuts formed a leafy background to these choicer growths, and masked the ugly frontage of Bellevue.

Two ponds, quaintly enclosed with wired railings, interrupted at proper intervals the slope of soft green turf. Each had a fountain in its midst, the one shaped like a classic urn,



the other a Cupid seated on a dolphin and blowing a conch. When the gardener made the water rise for us from those fountains, it flashed in the sunlight, tinkled on the leaves and cups of floating lilies, and disturbed the dragon-flies and gold fish from their sleepy ways. Birds were singing, as they only sing in old town gardens, a chorus of blackbirds, thrushes and finches. Rooks cawed from the elms above. The whole scene was ennobled by a feeling of respect, of merciful abstention from superfluous meddling. When Paul Fisher planned his pleasure ground he meant it, according to the taste of that period, to be artificial, and yet to vie with Nature. Now Nature had asserted her own sway, retaining through that century of wayward growth something which still owed its charm to artifice.

Although I am speaking of my home, and must of necessity be partial, I do not think I violate the truth when I say, that this garden possessed a special grace and air of breeding, which lent distinction to the dignified but rather stolid house above. It was old enough to have felt 'the unimaginable touch of time,' and yet not old or neglected enough to have fallen into decay. Left alone, it had gained a character of wildness, and yet kind touches had been given which preserved it from squalor. Wealthy folk had always inhabited the mansion, and their taste respected the peculiar beauty of the place. Afterwards, at New College and St. John's, among the Oxford College gardens, I recognised the same charm. But the distinctive feature of the Clifton Hill garden was that the ground fell rapidly away from the terrace and the house, so that the windows above enjoyed a vast prospect across its undulating roof of verdure to the towered city, the glimpses of the Avon, the sea-going ships, and, far away beyond all that, to the hills of Bath, and the long stretch of Dundry. It was a remarkable home for a dreamy town-bred boy of ten to be transported into.

On that eventful morning the air hung heavy with a scent of hidden musk. The broad flower-beds upon the terrace and along the walls were a tangle of old-fashioned herbs in bloom—mulberry-coloured scabious, love-in-idleness, love-in-a-

mist, love-lies-bleeding, devil-in-a-bush, hollyhocks, carnations, creeping-jenny, damask and cabbage, and York and Lancaster roses. The mingled perfume of musk and rose pervades my memory when I think of that day; and when I come by accident upon the scent of musk in distant places, I am again transported to the fairyland of boyhood. The throat-notes of thrush and blackbird, the music of tinkling fountains, the drowsy rhythm of hammers struck on timber in the city dock-yards, blend in my recollection with pure, strong slumberous summer sunlight and rich colours.

There was much in the mansion itself which satisfied my craving for architectural solidity and stateliness. The pediment of stone above our front-door in Berkeley Square had, as I have already mentioned, consoled my childish senses. The style of that detail was here expanded through the whole substantial edifice. The rusticated work upon the spacious massive basements, the balustraded staircases descending to the terrace, the huge balls of Bath stone placed at proper intervals upon the lower line of office-buildings, the well-proportioned if too lofty rooms, the dignified waste of useful space in the long passages; all these characteristics of the Georgian manner gave satisfaction to my instinct of what is liberal in art, though of course they could not feed my fancy. I did not then reflect how gloomy that square house might be, how prosaic the inspiration of its builder was, how like prisons the upper rooms with their high windows are, and how melancholy the vast prospect over city, sky, and stretching hills would afterwards appear to me in moods of weariness.

Then there were stables with hay-lofts, and a paved yard, where my father generally kept eight horses; a summer house, upon the wall of which vines clambered and nectarines ripened; a kitchen-garden full of strawberries and currant-bushes, apricots, and plums and peaches. The top of the house itself formed a capital playground for us children. A rambling attic, which we called the loft, stretched away into mysterious recesses and dark corners. In some of these obscure chambers cisterns were hidden, which supplied the house with rain water; from the narrow windows of others we could clamber

out upon the roof, the sloping gables of which were covered with solid lead, and fenced about with broad slabs of rough clean chiselled stone. From this height the eye swept spaces of the starry heavens at night; by day, town, tower, and hill, wood, field, and river lay bathed in light, and flecked with shadows of the clouds.

The transition from Berkeley Square to Clifton Hill House contributed greatly, I am sure, to make me what I am. I cannot, of course, say what I should have become had we remained in our old home; but I am certain that the new one formed my character and taste at a period when youth is most susceptible. My latent æsthetic sensibilities were immediately and powerfully stimulated.

Some years after the time of which I am writing, I brought a Balliol friend to stay with me at Clifton. On taking leave at the end of the visit, he remarked, 'I understand you now, and know what it is that made you what you are.' He was right, I believe. Places exercise commanding influence in the development of certain natures. Mine is one of them, and Clifton, with the house we lived in, had a magic of its own. Thirty-nine years have elapsed since I first went to live at Clifton Hill. The place has changed to such an extent that any one who knows it now might be excused for thinking I am rhapsodising. He must bear in mind, however, that there were few buildings then between the parish church and Durdham Downs. The suburb which has grown up round the College was a tract of fields, at the end of which lay the Zoological Gardens. Pembroke Road formed part of a narrow footway between quickset hedges, bearing the agreeable title of Gallows Lane. The Tyburn of old Bristol occupied a plot of ground at the head of it toward the downs. Coal-smoke had not contaminated the air to any appreciable extent. The sea and river-fogs of November were fleecy-white. No ironworks defaced the vale of Ashton. The thousands of middle-class houses which now stretch from Clifton Church to Redland, and which are crawling on from Redland to Westbury, were then represented by two or three straggling terraces, by here and there a villa enclosed in its own crofts and gardens, by the

long line of miscellaneous dwellings called Whiteladies Road, which extended from the top of Park Street to the sign of the Black Boy, and there abruptly stopped before the silence and the solitude of the windy down. The downs, too, were wild, heathy, and covered in the spring with flowers ; not, as now, a kind of suburban park, but a real wilderness, a pleasure-ground for the romantic soul.

My tutor, the Rev. William Knight, gave up his school, and came to live at no great distance from our house. He occupied a dreary abode in Wetherell Place ; the outer walls rough-cast and painted a dull lilac ; standing in a stuffy plot of shrubbery between a blank wall to the front and a tall row of houses to the back. How any reasonable human being could in Clifton—the very essence of which place was poetry in some form or another—whether of the ancient town beside it, or of the free nature on its northern borders—have selected to abide in Wetherell Place, that region of shabby-genteel prose and stifling dulness, I am not prepared to say. Probably there were economical reasons, and social inducements, together with conveniences of contiguity to the Blind Asylum and St. Michael's Church, which determined Mr. Knight in his choice.

Mr. Knight could not be called an ideal tutor. He was sluggish, and had no sympathy for boys. Yet he was a sound scholar of the old type, and essentially a gentleman. He let me browse, much as I liked, about the pastures of innocuous Greek and Latin literature. He taught me to write Latin verses with facility. If I did not acquire elegance, that was the defect of my own faculty for style. I think he might have grounded me better in grammar than he did ; and it would have been an incalculable advantage to me if he had been able to direct my keen, though latent, enthusiasm for books. In this respect, I owe him one only debt of gratitude. We were reading the sixth book of the 'Æneid.' He noticed what a deep hold the description of Elysium took on my imagination, and lent me Warburton's 'Divine Legation of Moses.' A chapter in that book about the Mysteries opened dim and shadowy vistas for my dreaming thoughts. I cannot remember any

other instance of my tutor's touching the real spring of thirst for knowledge in my nature. For the rest, he took care that I should understand the Odes of Horace and be capable of reproducing their various metres. This gave me a certain advantage when I came to Harrow.

With Mr. Knight I read a large part of the 'Iliad.' When we came to the last books I found a passage which made me weep bitterly. It was the description of Hermes, going to meet Priam, disguised as a mortal :

*βῆ δ' ἰέναι κούρῳ αἰσυμνητῇρι ἔοικώς,  
πρώτον ὑπηνήτην, τοῦ περ χαριεστάτη ἦβη.*

The Greek in me awoke to that simple, and yet so splendid vision of young manhood, 'In the first budding of the down on lip and chin, when youth is at her loveliest.' The phrase had all Greek sculpture in it. The overpowering magic of masculine adolescence drew my tears forth. I had none to spare for Priam prostrate at the feet of his son's murderer; none for Andromache bidding a last farewell to Hector of the waving plumes. These personages touched my heart, and thrilled a tragic chord. But the disguised Hermes, in his prime and bloom of beauty, unlocked some deeper fountains of eternal longing in my soul.

Somewhat later, I found another line which impressed me powerfully, and unsealed hidden wells of different emotion. It was in the Hippolytus of Euripides :

*ἡ γλῶσσ' ὁμώμοχ', ἡ δὲ φρὴν ἀνώμοτος.*

The sense of casuistry and criticism leapt into being at that touch. I foresaw, in that moment, how pros and cons of moral conduct would have to be debated, how every thesis seeks antithesis and resolution in the mental sphere.

These were but vague awakenings of my essential self. For the most part, I remained inactive, impotent, somnambulistic, touching life at no edged point, very slowly defining the silhouette of my eventual personality.

Walking to and fro between Clifton Hill and Wetherell Place, I used to tell myself long classic stories, and to



improvise nonsense verses on interminable themes. The vehicle I used was chiefly blank verse or trochaics. I delighted my sense of rhythm with the current of murmured sound. The subject I chose for these peripatetic rhapsodies was the episode of young Apollo, in his sojourn among mortals, as the hind of King Admetus. What befell him there, I expanded into nebulous epics of suffering and love, and sorrow-dimmed deity involved with human sympathies. I declaimed the verse *sotto voce* as I walked. But now I can recall no incidents in the long poem, which, like a river, flowed daily, and might for ever have flowed on. The kernel of my inspiration was that radiant figure of the young Apollo, doomed to pass his time with shepherds, serving them, and loving them. A luminous haze of yearning emotion surrounded the god. His divine beauty penetrated my soul and marrow. I stretched out my arms to him in worship. It was I alone who knew him to be Olympian, and I loved him because he was a hind who went about the stables milking cows. I was, in fact, reading myself into this fable of Apollo, and quite unconsciously, as I perceive now, my day-dreams assumed an objective and idealised form. Indeed, this preoccupation with the legend of the discovered Phoebus casts vivid light upon my dumbly growing nature.

It is singular that a boy should have selected any legend so dim and subtle for treatment in the way I have described. But, what is far more curious, it seems that I was led by an unerring instinct to choose a myth foreshadowing my peculiar temperament and distant future. I have lived to realise that obscure vision of my boyhood. Man loves man, and Nature ; the pulse of human life, the contact with the genial earth are the real things. Art must ever be but a shadow for truly puissant individualities. In this way I have grown to think and feel. And just for this reason, my boyish preoccupation with the legend of Apollo in the stables of Admetus has psychological significance. It shows how early and instinctively I apprehended the truth, by the light of which I still live, that a disguised god, communing with mortals, loving mortals and beloved by them, is more beautiful, more desirable, more

enviable, than the same god uplifted on the snow-wreaths of Olympus, or the twin peaks of muse-haunted Parnassus.

Rightly or wrongly, the principles involved in that boyish vision of Phœbus, the divine spirit serving and loving in plain ways of pastoral toil, have ended by fashioning my course. It has become my object to assimilate culture to the simplest things in man's life, and to assume from human sympathy of the crudest kind fuel and fire for the vivifying of ideas. By means of this philosophy I have been enabled to revive from mortal sickness, and what is perhaps more, to apprehend the religious doctrine of democracy, the equality and homogeneity of human beings, the divinity enclosed in all. It was not, therefore, by accident, I think, that the prolonged daydream of Apollo in exile haunted me during my somnambulistic boyhood. Temperaments of my stamp come to themselves by broodings upon fancies which prefigure the destiny in store for them, and are in fact the symbols of their soul.

I took little pleasure in athletic sports of any kind. To ramble over the downs and through the woods was enough for me. I hated the exertion, rivalry, and noise of games. Want of muscular vigour and timidity combined to make me solitary. Yet I could run well, and jump standing the height of my own shoulders. I liked riding also, but was neither a bold nor expert horseman.

What I most enjoyed was leading a band of four boys, my cousins, in wild scrambles over Durdham Downs, and on the rocks that overhung the Avon. We played at defending and attacking castles, which were located upon points of vantage in the gully near the sea-walls and the steep descent of cliff beneath St. Vincent's rock. No harm came of these adventures, although we defied each other to deeds of daring in places where a fall would have been perilous exceedingly. Tired out and panting with this kind of exercise, I used to fling myself upon some grassy ledge among the lady's-bed-straw and blue harebells, watching the ships coming floating down the Avon or the jackdaws chattering in their ivy-curtained crannies.

For everything which I took up, whether study or amusement, I showed a languid dilettante interest, pursuing it without



energy or perseverance. Thus I played with an electrical machine and microscope, collected flowers and dried them, caught butterflies and pinned them upon corks ; but I was far too dreamy and impatient to acquire any solid knowledge of natural science. I crammed my memory with the names of infusorial animalcules, sea-weeds, wild-flowers—a great many of which still lie in the lumber-room of my brain. I got to know the aspects of such things, and enjoyed the places where I went to find my specimens. But of animal or vegetable physiology I learned nothing. One reason was, perhaps, that I had no one to teach me and no attractive text-books. The real secret of my inefficiency lay, however, in want of will and liking for accurate study. I was a weakling in mind and body, only half awake.

Early in the winter of one year I fell ill of chronic diarrhœa. To this I had been subject at intervals from my earliest infancy ; and now I poisoned myself by drinking some cheap effervescing mixtures. My father sent me to stay with friends at Torquay. They lived in a little cottage with a front garden full of sweet-smelling violets, fuchsias, and shrub veronicas in bloom. I date a considerable mental progress from this visit. There I learned the beauty of the sea—low tides and pools upon the shore of Torbay. Dr. Tetley used to drive me about the country in his carriage ; and a diminutive naturalist was very kind to me. He took me with him out upon the reefs to gather sea-weeds. I made a huge collection of such things.

Even now I can remember the solemnity with which my friend exclaimed, when I hauled some spidery black weed out of a pool, ‘I do believe that you have captured *Gigantea Tædii*.’ All through the remainder of the winter and spring, after I returned to Clifton, hampers sent by a Torbay fisherman used to arrive stuffed with the wrack of the shore. Charlotte, Mdlle. Sophie Girard and I, divided the slimy mass into three equal portions, floated our booty in three separate tubs, and fished with eager fingers for *Delesseria sanguinea*, *Padina pavonia*, or a fine specimen of *Plocaria coccinea*.

It was on my return from this visit to Torquay that I first

set eyes on Mdlle. Girard. She had arrived in my absence to be my sisters' governess. They came back from a walk while I was standing in the hall, between the dining-room and drawing-room doors. Her bright face, rosy with the freshness of the open air, her laughing eyes and abundance of glossy yellow hair made a very pleasant impression on me. I felt at once that she would be a great addition to our home circle; and this in truth she was, far more than I could then imagine. She taught me German—the little German I know I owe entirely to her. She had a gift for teaching, and was the first person from whom I consciously learned anything whatsoever.

About this time I began to walk in my sleep. It seemed to me that a corpse lay beside me in the bed. To escape from it, I got up and roamed about the house; but there were corpses standing in the doorways as I hurried through the long dark corridors. One night I wandered into the loft, and was walking straight into an open cistern which collected the rain-water from the roof, when I felt the hands of a great angel with outspread wings laid upon my shoulders. For a moment I woke up, and saw the moonlight glinting on the water through some cranny. Then I fell asleep again, and returned unconsciously to bed. Next morning my shins and thighs were badly bruised, and the footman, who slept in the loft, had a mysterious tale to tell, of a white being who had moved about the furniture and boxes. It appears that the stupid fellow had allowed himself actually to be shoved by me, bed and all, from the door through which I passed into the remote corner where the cistern lay. After this occurrence, my father had me tied into bed by one of my ankles every night. When the corpse came to expel me, I floundered on the floor until I woke and crept back shivering between the sheets. This Spartan discipline effectually cured me of sleep-walking.

A recurrent dream of quite a new sort now visited my slumbers. It was the beautiful face of a young man, with large blue eyes and waving yellow hair which emitted a halo of misty light. He bent down gazing earnestly till he touched me. Then I woke and beheld the aureole fading away into darkness.

Much might be written about the self-revealing influence of dreams and the growth of the inner man in sleep. The vision of ideal beauty, thus presented to me in slumber, symbolised spontaneous yearnings deeply seated in my nature, and prepared me to receive many impressions of art and literature.

A photograph of the Praxitelean Cupid—

That most perfect of antiques  
They call the Genius of the Vatican,  
Which seems too beauteous to endure itself  
In this mixed world—

taught me to feel the secret of Greek sculpture. I used to pore for hours together over the divine loveliness, while my father read poetry aloud to us in the evenings. He did not quite approve, and asked me why I would not choose some other statue, a nymph or Hebe. Following the impressions made by Shakespeare's Adonis and the Homeric Hermes, blending with the dream I have described, and harmonising with my myth of Phœbus in the sheepcotes, this photograph strengthened the ideal I was gradually forming of adolescent beauty. It prepared me to receive the Apoxyomenos and Marlowe's Leander, the young men of Plato, and much besides. I was certainly a rather singular boy. But I suppose, if other people wrote down the history of their mental growth with the same frankness and patience, I should not stand alone.

What I really wanted at this period was some honest youth for comrade. My equals repelled me. As it was, I lived into emotion through the brooding imagination, and nothing is more dangerous, more unhealthy than this.

I was very fond of picture-books, and drew a great deal from Raphael, Flaxman, and Retzsch. Our house was well stocked with engravings, photographs, copies of Italian pictures and illustrated works upon Greek sculpture; Lasinio's 'Campo Santo of Pisa,' Sir William Hamilton's vases, the 'Museo Borbonico,' and the two large folios issued by the Dilettanti Society were among my chief favourites. But I carried my habitual indolence and irresolution into these studies. I had

no artistic originality, and would not take the trouble to learn to draw well. We went to an art-school just then established in Bristol. The hexagons, cubes, patterns they gave me to copy filled me with repugnance.

It is probable that the abundance of art material at home was not an unmixed good. It certainly familiarised me with a large variety of masterpieces, and taught me to discriminate styles. But when I came to study critically, my mind was stocked with a mass of immature associations and imperfect memories. The sharp impression made on me by Botticelli, Tintoretto, Signorelli, Mantegna, Bellini, Luini, and Gaudenzio Ferrari, during my earliest Italian journeys, may be ascribed to the fact that their works were almost entirely unrepresented in my father's library. We had one piece of Signorelli's, by the way. It was Macpherson's photograph of the 'Fulminati' at Orvieto. It had come by accident, I think, and nobody knew what it represented or who had painted it. I used to brood over the forcible, spasmodic vigour of this tragic group—feeling it quite different, far more penetrative, than anything in Raphael or Michael Angelo. Yet, Duppa's large studies from the Last Judgment in the Sistine were well known to me. Toschi's admirable engravings of Correggio's frescoes at Parma, which were sent to us at intervals by Colnaghi, as they appeared, taught me to appreciate the melodic suavity of design. I always connected them with the airs from Mozart's Masses which my sister Edith used to play.

My sensibility to natural beauty meanwhile expanded. The immersion in the mystery of landscape, which I have already described, yielded to more conscious pleasure and a quicker sympathy. Yet I grew but slowly, and disengaged myself with difficulty from the narcotism of my mental faculties.

When the family was gone to bed, I spent hours alone in my bedroom at the north-east angle of the house, watching the clouds and mists of autumn drifting and recomposing their flying forms around the moon, high up above the city lamps.

I woke at dawn to see the sunrise flood the valley, touch the steeples of the town, shimmer upon the water where ships

lay, and glance along the stirless tree-tops of the garden, green in dewy depths below me.

One morning in particular I can remember. On the preceding evening we had picked autumn crocuses in the fields by Westbury. The flowers were placed in a great bowl outside my bedroom door. The sunrise woke me, and I opened the door to look again upon them. A broad, red ray of light fell full upon their lilac chalices, intensifying and translating into glowing amethyst each petal.

Winter sunrise provided pageants of more fiery splendour. From the dark rim of Dundry Hill, behind which the sun was journeying, striving to emerge, there shot to the clear sapphire zenith shafts of rosy flame, painting the bars of clouds with living fire, and enamelling the floating mists, which slowly changed and shifted across liquid spaces of orange, daffodil, and beryl.

Lightning, in thunderstorms of summer nights, made the wide world beneath me visible by flashes; deluged the hissing rain with palpitating whiteness; brought into metallic clearness leaf by leaf of the intensely verdant trees; restored a momentary scarlet to the geraniums and verbenas in the flower-beds.

The evening-star, liquid, dilated, in pure sky-spaces above the churchyard gate, or tangled in the distant trees of Ashton, drew my soul out with longings such as melodies of Mozart excite.

Once there was a comet, a thin rod of amber white, drowned in the saffron of the sunset, which slowly sank, and disappeared into the western hills beyond the channel.

Mellow mists above the Avon in October, veiling the russet woods; the masts of great ships slowly moving, scarcely visible through pearly vapour; glimpses of sea-gulls following the barques from their far ocean-journeys; knee-deep wanderings in Leigh Woods' bracken; climbings of the grey St. Vincent's Rocks in search of flowers, where the jackdaws flew frightened from their holes as I came near them; the panoply of silver bloom with which the thorns on Clifton Downs arrayed themselves in May; the ripe horse-chestnuts found in



drifts of rustling leaves in autumn—it is enough to rapidly note such things, which bred in me the sense of natural beauty and the love of colour.

After my recovery from the illness alluded to above, an amateur artist, Mr. Vigor, painted the portrait of me in oil which now hangs in the dining-room of Sidbury Manor. I used to sit for this picture in his studio, which was a north room of a house in the Royal York Crescent. The likeness was reckoned very good. It shows me to have been a slight boy, with abundance of brown hair, soft brown eyes, delicate hands, and a dreamy expression.

I am sure that I was not personally vain. Inside the family I was twitted so unmercifully with my mealy complexion, snub nose, and broad mouth, that I almost shrank from sight, and felt grateful to people who did not treat me with merited contempt. ‘Oh, Johnnie, you look as yellow as a lemon this morning!’ ‘There you go, with your mouth stretching from ear to ear!’ These were some of the amenities, not unkindly meant, and only expressive of a real concern about my weakly constitution, which developed in me a morbid and unamiable self-consciousness. I had no power of reacting vigorously, and did not set my back up or assert myself. But I nourished a secret resentment, and proud obstinate aloofness.

Physical weakness depressed me. I had more nervous vitality than muscular robustness, a small share of bodily pluck, and no combativeness. Naturally shy and timid through sensitiveness, though by no means morally a coward, I sought to be left alone, convinced that I could interest nobody.

But I developed some disagreeable qualities akin to vanity. Being told that our name was ‘so common,’ the sound of it became odious to my ears. We were also reminded, and I think rightly, that the ease in which we lived, the number of servants who waited on us, the carriages and horses, the large house and its profuse objects of interest and beauty, the dinner-parties we gave, and the crowds of distinguished people who visited our home, were all contingent on my father’s professional success. Doctors, it was added, have no rank in society. This was



very true, and it argued something ungenerous in my nature that I did not accept the fact cheerfully.

[It should be borne in mind, however, that this retrospect was written late in Symonds' life, when many years of internal struggle and physical suffering had thrown a shadow over the past. The picture requires modification, and this it will presently receive from the correspondence of Mdlle. Girard, and, to some extent, from Symonds' own schoolboy letters written from Harrow. Meantime the autobiography has to be followed.]

I<sup>1</sup> soon perceived that my father's character, ability, and many-sided culture separated him from the ordinary run of medical men. He was sought after on his own rare merits by men and women of birth, position, political and social importance. The friend of John Sterling, Frederick Maurice, Myers of Keswick, Lord Lansdowne, Hallam, Jowett, Lord Monteagle, Principal Forbes, Lord Aberdare, Lady Dufferin, Dean Elliot, Sir Edward Strachey, Dr. Carpenter, Dr. Prichard, Sir Montagu Macmurdo, and scores of others I could mention, was an exceptional physician, and his only son enjoyed exceptional advantages in the society of such people.

This did not, however, compensate to my own cross-grained consciousness for the patent facts of my personal drawbacks. I was a physically insignificant boy, with an ill-sounding name, and nothing to rely on in the circumstances of my family. Instead of expanding in the social environment around me, I felt myself at a disadvantage, and early gained the notion that I must work for my own place in the world—in fact, that I should have no place till I had made one for myself. The result was that, instead of being flattered, I almost resented the attentions paid me as my father's son, and was too stupid to perceive how honourable, as well as valuable, they might be, if I received them with a modest frankness. I regarded them as acts of charitable condescension. Thus I passed into an attitude of haughty shyness, which had nothing respectable in

<sup>1</sup> Autobiography.

it, except a sort of self-reliant, world-defiant pride, a resolution to effectuate myself, and to win what I wanted by my exertions.

The inborn repugnance to sordid things, which I have already described as one of my main characteristics, now expressed itself in a morbid sense of my physical ugliness, common patronymic, undistinguished status, and mental ineffectiveness. I did not envy the possessors of beauty, strength, birth, rank, or genius; but I vowed to raise myself, somehow or other, to eminence of some sort. How this was to be done, when there were so many difficulties in the way, I did not see. Without exactly despairing, I felt permanently discouraged.

My ambition took no vulgar form. I felt no desire for wealth, no mere wish to cut a figure in society. But I thirsted with intolerable thirst for eminence, for recognition as a personality. At the same time I had no self-confidence, no belief in my intellectual powers. I was only buoyed up by an undefined instinct that there was stuff in me. Meanwhile, all I could do was to bide my time, and see how things would go, possessing my soul in silence, and wrapping a cloak of reserve about my internal hopes and aims.

The state which I have just described began to define itself during the first period of boyhood. But it grew and strengthened with the following years. It was highly characteristic of my temperament that, powerfully as I felt these cravings, they did not take a very distinct form, and did not stimulate me to any marked activity.

The depressing conviction of my own unattractiveness and inefficiency saved me perhaps from some evil. If I had been a little vainer, I might have become presumptuous, or vulgarly ambitious. I might perhaps, too, have fallen into moral difficulties. As it was, this conviction kept me aloof from companions, and hedged me round with the security of isolation.

The result of my habitual reserve was, that I now dissembled my deepest feelings, and only revealed those sentiments which I knew would pass muster. Without meaning to do so, I came to act a part, and no one knew what was going on inside me.

A boy wants a mother at such periods of uneasy fermentation. I was ready enough in writing to communicate such portions of my experience as I chose to exhibit—impenetrably reserved in the depth of myself, rhetorically candid on the surface. My father, not unnaturally, misunderstood this complication. He afterwards told me that he sent me with undoubting confidence to Harrow, because he had no conception that I was either emotional or passionate. The unconscious dissimulation I habitually practised blinded him to the truth. Feeling that I was growing and must grow in solitude to an end I could not foresee, which no one could help me to shape, and which I was myself impotent to determine, I allowed an outer self of commonplace cheerfulness and easy-going pliability to settle like a crust upon my inner and real character.

Nothing is more difficult than to analyse such psychological conditions without attributing too much deliberation and consciousness to what was mainly a process of spontaneous development. Congenital qualities and external circumstance acted together to determine a mental duality—or shall we call it a duplicity?—of which I became aware when it had taken hold upon my nature.

On my twelfth birthday I went up as usual to kiss my father. He said gravely, 'Shake hands; you are growing too old for kissing.' I felt rather ashamed of having offered what my twelfth birthday rendered unseemly, and took a step upon the path toward isolation. But there was something savage in me which accepted the remark with approval. Henceforth I shrank from the exposure of emotion, except upon paper, in letters, and in studied language.

I have drawn a somewhat disagreeable picture of my early boyhood. It is very probable that I am, to some extent, imparting to this period qualities which were really developed by my intense hatred for life at Harrow. I was bound to do so, because it presents itself under these aspects very vividly to my mind, and because I find that the recollection is confirmed by a poem called 'Theodore,' which I wrote at Malvern in the autumn of 1862, when the facts of that period were still fresh in my memory.

Still it must not be imagined that I was a moody, discontented, miserable boy. I had high spirits enough, and knew how to make myself agreeable in congenial society. I was talkative, easily interested, ready to find amusement in all sorts of petty things, so long as these were not school-games, and involved no sort of physical competition. The inner growth was so much more important to myself, and still remains so, that I have failed to communicate a proper notion of the whole. Indeed, no one can get outside himself and see what he appears. He only knows himself inside, and knows that aspect only in part.

One thing is certain. I acquired a passionate affection for my home and Clifton, which included my family, although I think I cared for them chiefly as forming parts of the delightful environment.

I believe that Mdlle. Girard would correct the impression I have conveyed through my sincere desire to record the truth of my internal nature; and at my request she has written the following account of what she remembers of the first year of her life at Clifton.

‘37 FRIEDENSGASSE.

‘MY DEAR JOHNNIE,—I will endeavour to tell you what you ask, and if I fail, it is not from want of remembering but from general stupidity. Those early Clifton days stand in their minutest details before me. I came to you in ’53, when I suppose you were twelve. We became friends at once over a bundle of sea-weeds you had brought back. You were fond of imparting knowledge, and I was glad to learn, so I very soon became your devoted slave like the rest of the household. We all vied in doing what you would like, and it was a pleasure, a natural instinct, I may say.

‘Your temper was perfect, so it was not fear that compelled us to submit to your rule. When you were with us, you never showed the least sign of the despondency that troubled you as soon as you were away from home. You were always joyous and bright, fond of teasing us in the manner of boys, and very fond of sitting on other people and cutting them to pieces. It

was the besetting sin of us all, but certainly you were the leader and were merciless to a set of frumps (your name for them), which before each party Charlotte, you, and I were ordered to amuse, while Edith and Maribella devoted themselves to a more select company. When the decisive moment came, no one could have been more suave and fascinating than you were, and the frumps, one and all, adored you and had a happy evening.

‘The acquirement of any kind of knowledge seemed equally easy to you, and was pursued until conquered. Natural history and poetry were then your favourite studies, and we never took our walks abroad without either Chaucer or Southey. I speak of quite the earliest days of our acquaintance, when I scarcely knew enough English to understand everything you read to me. How well I remember sitting by the pond at the Zoological Gardens, and your reading “Thalaba” and the “Curse of Kehama” to me, while Charlotte, who certainly had no liking for the divine Muse then, fed the swans and ran about.

‘In those days you liked women’s society, and abominated boys. Woe to us if we dared, in order to tease you, express admiration or liking for one of your friends. It was not to be tolerated a moment, nor was it ever meant in earnest, for you certainly were the most delightful, intelligent, cheerful, and amusing companion. Your activity of mind and body were wonderful, and as I was never so happy as when climbing a tree or a precipitous rock, we got on admirably.

‘I must not forget to mention that you dearly loved arguing, and that on Sunday evenings when we had tea instead of dinner, and recited a poem to Miss Sykes afterwards, you never missed the opportunity of having a religious argument, and almost reduced her to tears with your inflexible logic. We all thought you must become a barrister, and you actually promised me a handsome Mausoleum when you became Lord Chancellor.

‘I do not remember your writing poetry or stories then. Many years after, when we had “The Constellation,”<sup>1</sup> you wrote of course.

<sup>1</sup> A magazine compiled by the members of Clifton Hill House.

‘These impressions relate to the time before you went to Harrow. I can still feel the desolation and the void your absence made. You went off bravely enough the first time, but the second you cried and we cried, and there seemed no pleasure in the house. How dull the schoolroom was until the holidays.

‘Now, I hope, you will gather some notion of what you were then. I could go on for a long time in the same strain. Don’t you really remember what you were like in the least?’



## CHAPTER III

BOYHOOD (*continued*)

Goes to Harrow—First impressions—Internal attitude—Intellectual condition—Head of his house—Dislike of Harrow—Contrasted with Clifton—Friendships—The Rev. John Smith—Gustavus Bosanquet—Confirmation—Letters to his sister Charlotte—Harrow sermons—Football—Reading in chapel—Debate on ghosts—Speech day—An *excursion* to London—Reads Plato for the first time—Result.

WHEN<sup>1</sup> I left home for Harrow in the spring of 1854—it was the month of May—I had acquired a somewhat curious personality. Weakness and strength, stoicism and sensibility, frigidity and tenderness, ignorance of the world, and stubborn resistance to external influences were strangely blent in my raw nature. The main thing which sustained me was a sense of self, imperious, antagonistic, unmalleable. But what that self was, and why it kept aloof, I did not know. 185

My aunt and my sister Edith left me at the King's Head. They drove back to London. I walked down alone to my tutor's house. This was the house of the Rev. Robert Knight, son of my Clifton tutor, and curate to the Vicar of Harrow. He took, so far as I remember, three boys as lodgers: a son of Abel Smith, the banker, a young Wingfield, and myself. We slept in one room.

I felt that my heart would break as I scrunched the muddy gravel, beneath the boughs of budding trees, down to the house. But I said to my heart: 'I have to be made a man here.' This was the one thought uppermost.

Sometimes, when I was alone in bed, I cried—thinking of Clifton. I remember one night when I felt sure that I had

<sup>1</sup> Autobiography.

been at home, and stood in twilight at the end of the bedroom corridor, looking through elm-branches into the grey south-western skies; I did not doubt that my spirit could somnambulistically travel from the place I hated to the place I loved.

But this made no impression on my daily conduct. I accepted life at Harrow as a discipline to be gone through. It was not what I wanted. But being prescribed, it had its utility. Thus from the commencement of my schooling I assumed an attitude of resistance and abeyance. Unutterably stupid this, perhaps. Yet it could not have been otherwise. Such was my nature.

I had never been thrown so entirely upon my own resources before. The situation accentuated that double existence which I have described, and which was becoming habitual. Internally, as a creature of dreams, of self-concentrated wilfulness, of moral force sustained by obstinate but undeveloped individuality, I was in advance of my new comrades. Externally, compared with them, I was a baby—destitute of experience, incapable of asserting myself, physically feeble, timid, shrinking from contact.

The imperious, unmalleable, uncompromising egotism, which I felt unformed within me, kept me up. I did not realise whither I was going. I felt that my course, though it collided with that of my schoolfellows, was bound to be different from theirs. To stand aloof, to preserve the inner self inviolate, to await its evolution was my dominant instinct. I cannot imagine a more helpless and more stiff-necked, a more unsympathetic and more unlovable boy than I was.

To make the situation worse, I had no escapement from self, no really healthful enlargement of nature at Harrow. I shrank from games of every sort, being constitutionally unfit for violent exercise, and disliking competition. I had no inclination for cricket, football, racquets, and I even disliked fencing. My muscular build was slight. I could not throw a ball or a stone like other boys. And, oddly enough, I could not learn to whistle like them. And yet I was by no means effeminate. My father, judging rightly or wrongly of my physical capacity, took measures for having me excused from

playing either cricket or football. I was placed too high in the school for fagging. In this way I did not come into salutary contact with my schoolfellows. It would assuredly have been far better for me had I been cast more freely upon their society. My dislike for games had more to do with a dreamy and self-involved temperament than with absolute physical weakness. I could jump standing to the height of just below my own chin, and could run with the swiftest. Fagging again would have brought me into practical relations with the elder boys, and have rubbed off some of my fastidious reserve.

Intellectually, in like manner, I did not prosper. I got a remove from one form into the next above it every term, and always at the head of the new detachment. But none of my form-masters took hold upon my mind or woke me up. I was a very imperfect scholar when I left Harrow in 1858; and though I competed for the prizes—Latin and Greek verse, English Essay and Poem—I invariably failed. Such mark as I made was due to general ability and punctuality in work.

The spring for which my whole nature craved did not come to me at Harrow. My tutor—to whose house, called ‘Monkey’s,’ I went at the end of my first year—used to write in his reports that I was ‘deficient in vigour, both of body and mind.’ I do not think he was mistaken. Want of physical and cerebral energy showed itself in a series of depressing ailments. I slept uneasily, and dreamed painfully. Repulsive weaknesses—tedious colds, which lasted the whole winter—lowered my stamina, and painfully augmented my sense of personal squalor. I grew continually more and more shy, lost my power of utterance, and cut a miserable figure in form. I contracted the habit of stammering. This became so serious that Vaughan left off putting me on to read and construe Greek. The Monitors had to recite poems on Speech Day, which were previously rehearsed before the school. On one occasion I chose Raleigh’s ‘Lie’ for my piece. At the rehearsal I got through the first stanza, well or ill. Then my mind became a blank; and after a couple of minutes’ deadly silence, I had to sit down discomfited.

My external self, in these many ways, was being perpetually snubbed, and crushed, and mortified. Yet the inner self hardened after a dumb, blind fashion. I kept repeating, 'Wait, wait. I will, I shall, I must.' What I was to wait for, what I was destined to become, I did not ask. But I never really doubted my capacity to be something. In a vague way I compared myself to the ugly duckling of Andersen's tale.

Life at Harrow was not only uncongenial to my tastes and temperament; it was clearly unwholesome. Living little in the open air, poring stupidly and mechanically over books, shut up for hours in badly ventilated schoolrooms and my own close study, I dwindled physically. A liberal use of nerve-tonics, quinine, and strychnine, prescribed by my father, may have been a palliative; but these drugs did not reach the root of the evil, and they developed other evils which I afterwards discovered.

It is no wonder that I came to be regarded as an uncomradely, unclubbable boy by my companions. Yet I won their moral respect. The following little incident will show what I mean. One day the mathematical master accused me before the form of cribbing, or copying from my neighbour's papers. I simply declared that I had not cribbed. He punished me with 500 lines. I accepted the punishment in silence. Thereupon some of the other boys cried loudly, 'Shame,' and those who were sitting near me said I was a fool to bear it.

In like manner, though I was neither intellectually brilliant nor athletic, I acquired a considerable influence in my house, of which I was the head for nearly two years. I maintained discipline, and on one occasion I remember caning two big hulking fellows in the Shells for bullying. When I left Harrow the boys at 'Monkey's' subscribed to present me with a testimonial. It was Muir's 'History of Greek Literature,' handsomely bound, which my successor, Currey, handed to me with a speech of kindly congratulation.

My tutor, I think, made a great mistake in not consulting me with regard to the management of the house. According to the Rugby system, which Vaughan applied with certain

modifications at Harrow, important duties devolved upon the Sixth Form, and Monitors were theoretically held responsible for the behaviour of their juniors. Yet I cannot remember any act of personal friendliness or sympathy on my tutor's part towards myself. He never asked me to breakfast or to walk with him; never invited me to talk with him in the evenings; never consulted me about the conduct of the lower boys, or explained his own wishes with regard to discipline. I daresay he did not feel the want of my assistance, for he was very well served by his house-tutor, the Rev. John Smith. But he missed an opportunity of discharging his duty toward the ostensible head of his house with kindness, and through me of making his authority felt.

A sign that Harrow did not suit me in any way was the sentiment, approaching to aversion, which I felt for the fat clay soil and pasture landscape of the country round it. During long summer days, the slumberous monotony of grass-land, hedge-rows, buzzing flies and sultry heat, oppressed me. I could not react against the genius of the place, and kept contrasting it with Clifton's rocks and woods and downy turf.

Sordid details, inseparable from a boy's school life in a cheaply built modern house, revolted my taste—the bare and dirty rough-cast corridors, the ill-drained latrines, the stuffy studies with wired windows, the cheerless refectory. But these things, I reflected, were only part of life's open-road, along which one had to trudge for one's affairs—not worse, not more significant to the indwelling soul of man, than the *via dolorosa* from Berkeley Square to Buckingham Villas had been.

The uncongeniality of Harrow life and landscape made my holidays at Clifton very charming by contrast. There were long walks and talks with Charlotte and Sophie Girard, rides on the downs or toward the Bristol Channel, drives with my father through the Somersetshire lanes, discussions about poems and pictures, ramblings in the city streets, prowlings around the shelves of musty book shops, musings in the Cathedral and St. Mary Redclyffe, dreamy saunterings in the alleys of our



garden, lonely hours upon the housetop with that wide and varied scene outspread beneath me, dinner parties, and the company of cultured men and women.

All this, as I have said, contrasted only too sweetly with Harrow and the realities of school existence. In justice to myself, I think I ought to say that, although I always returned to Harrow unwillingly, I did so with the sense that Clifton was a Capua, and Harrow the camp, where I had to brace myself by discipline.

Meanwhile, I formed the habit of idealising Clifton, with results which the history of my after-growth made apparent. More and more it became for me the haunt of powerful emotions, the stage on which my inner self would have to play its part.

It would be absurd to pretend that I formed no friendships at Harrow. In order to complete the picture of my life there I must devote some paragraphs to sketching them.

The Rev. John Smith takes the first place. To his generous sympathy, manly and wise, at a period when I sorely needed sympathetic handling, I ascribe the only pure good of my Harrow training. Doubtless, not I alone, but hundreds of boys who came within the influence of that true Christian gentleman, whether they are now alive or sleeping in their graves upon all quarters of the habitable globe, would deliver the same testimony. It is possible, however, that I enjoyed a double portion of his kindly interest; for he had recently settled at Harrow, as form-master and house-tutor to 'Monkey's,' at the time when I was cast adrift upon school life. He took notice of me, and must have felt my special needs. Without making any demonstrations of friendship he so arranged that a peculiarly delightful comradeship should spring up between us. We took long walks together through the fields. It was our custom on these walks to repeat alternate passages from Shelley, Tennyson, and Keats, which we had previously learned by heart. In this way I absorbed a stupendous amount of good English verse. The house where his dear old mother dwelt at Pinner was frequently the goal of our excursions. Here we rested, after spouting the 'Skylark' or 'The Palace of



Art,' 'The Two Voices,' and 'The Ode to the Nightingale,' during our early morning or late evening passage over dewy fields and high-built stiles. There was always a cold veal-and-ham pie to be eaten with voracious appetite, strawberry-jam to follow, and an excellent brew of tea with thick country cream. Gradually I learned much about the history of this pure-hearted friend, the deep humility of his strong, patient nature, the calm and mellow touch of his religious philosophy upon feverish things of human life.

Gustavus Bosanquet comes next. He joined the school in the same term as I did ; and though I left him behind in our progress through the forms, we remained firm friends until the last. His parents, or rather his mother, had trained him in narrow Evangelical principles. These did not sit quite easily upon the boy. A strong religious bias formed the hardpan of his nature. Yet, in his own way, he felt the riddle of the universe. His exuberant affectionateness, indomitable humour, and generous devotion to a few friends raised him in the moral sphere high above the ranks of mere intelligence. Down to this day, I owe him a deep debt of gratitude for the love he gave me, for the loyalty with which he sustained me in my hours of self-abasement, and for the homely cheerfulness of his familiar conversation. We chummed together, cooked sausages together, played childish pranks, and called each other by ridiculous nicknames, living a little life of comradeship secluded from the daily round of lessons and school-business. Gustavus had his feet more firmly fixed upon the common ground of experience than I had. He saw the comic side of things, and this was very helpful to me. With him I was able to laugh and joke about incidents which angered or depressed my solitary nature. In return I gave him something from my ideality. Our fraternal love was very precious during my school life ; and if I were asked who was my bosom friend at Harrow, I should reply, 'Gustavus Bosanquet.'

There was another boy at 'Monkey's,' with whom Bosanquet and I had much to do. He possessed what neither Bosanquet nor I could boast of—the insect-like devotion to a creed. This was Ritualism, then in its green infancy. Half laughing at

him and ourselves, we followed him to compline, donned surplices and tossed censers, arrayed altars in our studies, spent spare cash on bits of execrable painted glass to dull our dingy windows, and illuminated crucifixes with gold dust and vermillion.

In the company of these and other friends I was confirmed. Confirmation ought, if it means anything, to exercise a decisive influence over the religious life of the individual—to make a new epoch in his spiritual progress. To some extent it did so with me. The preparation for the Sacrament worked like a ploughshare on the sub-soil of my piety. It turned up nothing valuable; but it stimulated my æsthetical and emotional ardour. I now inclined to a farcical ritualism, handling pseudo-sacred vessels in a night-gown surplice before a pseudo-altar. I laid myself open to enthusiasms of the shrine and sanctuary. In a dim way I felt God more. But I did not learn to fling the arms of soul in faith upon the cross of Christ. That was not in me. And it would be unfair to expect from any sacrament of the Church that it should work a miracle on catechumens.

[This period of Symonds' Harrow life is illustrated by extracts from his letters to his sister Charlotte, afterwards Mrs. Green, written during the years 1856-1858. These are the earliest of those contemporary authorities upon which I shall rely more and more as they become more frequent and full. They give us Symonds as he expressed himself to his nearest, not the Symonds of the reflecting mood—Symonds summing himself up after the lapse of forty years:]

1856 'I<sup>1</sup> should scarcely have hoped to survive to write to you. The weather is melting. Never—not even last August—have I felt so oppressed. I very nearly fainted in church, and was on the point of going out, but got better by resolutely thinking of something else.

'It has been a tiring day. I have heard three sermons. Do you not think that four services—three sermons and one school—are too much in this hot weather?

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte. Harrow, May 17, 1856.

‘I find Edith’s Italian Bible so nice. I take it to church and read the lessons with it, and prepare my Greek Test. by it, so that I pick up a good many words and phrases in an easy and ungrammary way.

‘I have had a new cover and cushion made for my chair. It is much fatter and more comfortable than the old one, which used to lump up all in a heap. I find it pleasant to work in while it is so hot. I think the nights are the worst part, where you fry and then go and be stewed for breakfast by a morning sun which beats in. I never, however, saw this place looking so pretty before. The leaves are full sized, but of the most delicate green, while the sky is cloudless and the atmosphere perfectly clear, so that we see every speck on the plain from Sydenham to the far-off Surrey hills, with Windsor, Hampstead, and Elstree. Is it not unusual to be so hot now? I have divested myself of all the clothes I can. It reminds me of that splendid summer of ’51 when we first came to Clifton Hill. Do you remember the garden then? It had a smell of musk and roses and thick dew which it never has had since. It used to be a miniature garden of the Hesperides, where those Buddleia bosses were the golden apples. There was not even the sleepy dragon to spoil our pleasure.’

[The Mr. John Smith, who is so warmly eulogised in the ‘Autobiography,’ is frequently referred to in the letters. It is clear that his was the personality from which Symonds gained most during his Harrow days. The walks and talks with this friend are always recorded with enjoyment.]

‘Yesterday<sup>1</sup> I had a delightful expedition. I started with Mr. Smith at half-past two from the station, and went by rail to Watford, where we got out and walked to Cassiobury, a place of Lord Essex. There are some splendid avenues and parks filled with deer there. We stayed in the park about two hours, and then walked on through woods and valleys until we came to the most exquisite beech avenue I ever saw. It was

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte. Harrow, June 1, 1857.

narrow, but very long, and the trees were planted so closely that they grew straight for some way without leaves, and then met at the top, making an exquisite cathedral aisle.

‘I read to Mr. Smith a Latin Alcaic poem on Cato. He seemed dissatisfied. My composition has gone off two-thirds since I was with Mr. —. Mr. Smith asked Mr. Westcott about a poem on the Rhine. His answer was, “It is the work of a tired mind.” I am extremely vexed at this, for I know that he means a want of energy, freshness, and raciness, which I once had, but have now entirely lost. I shall soon send papa this same Cato. It is two hundred lines, and I wrote it in about two hours. It was certainly too fast. I am now just looking through it, and by care I think I might make it better.’

[Symonds, even as early as these Harrow days, began to show that natural gift for descriptive writing which has made him the delightful companion of so many travellers. His weekly budgets to his sister, written on Sundays, with an important postscript added usually on Monday, are full of charming and often of amusing details, for which he possessed a keen eye. Here is an elaborate description of the Confirmation at Harrow :]

‘We<sup>1</sup> shall have a very tiring day to-day. First there is the early service before breakfast. Then the Confirmation lecture. Then the morning service and sermon. Then, after dinner, school. Then the evening and Confirmation services, and then the Bishop’s address.

‘*Monday morning.*—Now I must tell you all about the Confirmation. At school several notices were fulminated in Dr. V.’s obscurest style—highly calculated to confound and disorder all the arrangements and to bamboozle the clearest and most intelligent mind. One thing, however, appeared, that we were to have the evening service at half-past eight, and the Confirmation after. So, after school I set out for a walk

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte. Harrow, June 14, 1857.

with a friend of mine; we got into a discussion and found ourselves nearly at Pinner, above two miles off. There we heard the far-off tinkling of a bell. I looked at my watch, and finding it was half-past four, conjectured that it was nothing. After talking and sitting for half-an-hour more, another bell was heard. This time we set off, and tore over ploughed fields, hedges, ditches, and arrived at Harrow hot and miserable, at 5.15, to hear that the Confirmation service was to take place at 5.30. I had a mash of confused notices in my head, but found myself all right in the chapel at last. Then a dead pause. Every one was assembled as it seemed. But the Bishop was not there. Every moment fresh boys came dropping in from their walks. The bell was ringing like a tocsin. The organ played a melancholy air, and everybody was in suspense. At last all the candidates for confirmation were collected, and the Bishop, preceded by Dr. V., and followed by a chaplain, walked in and ascended the pulpit, and commenced the proceedings by an address. He looks taller and younger than I expected. His face is quite colourless now, and marked with deeper lines than I ever saw in anybody else. There was a kind of fixed, inflexible determination in him. His voice was very changeable, sometimes deep and harsh, at others soft and musical. In his address he dwelt upon the sorrows of the world, so surely to be suffered by all, the vows by which we were bound, the condemnation of those who took them lightly, and then, changing his tone, talked of the blessings of the service. After the laying on of hands, he gave a second short address on the Lord's Sacrament, standing with his cap in his hand in front of the communion rails. We went up six by six. Both addresses were extempore. After the service he and his chaplain departed, and we had the evening service. He had been preaching before the Queen in the morning, and had been invited suddenly in the afternoon to dine with her at eight, so he posted down here at once, and the boys had thus to be collected by these bells from over the country.'

[Although Symonds in certain moods, perhaps the most permanent moods, represents himself as shrinking with dislike



from all school games, the following passages show that he took his part in them, and not without a dash of pleasure:]

‘I<sup>1</sup> have been down this afternoon to football with the school. The game was the Fifth Form against the School. I found out the meaning of certain terms I had not hitherto quite appreciated, such as that of a “squash.” A squash is a large collection of boys, about twenty, with the football in the midst of them. They are all kicking it and each other in their endeavours to extricate the ball, and woe to the unlucky wight who falls. He is instantly trampled upon by every one. I, to-day, when in a squash, was suddenly propelled by one of the heaviest boys in the school. I rushed forward and stood in a semi-upright position on another boy, whose thigh I was grinding and pounding with my heavy boots, until the ball was hurled out, and then every one came on the ground together. On the whole, there is not so much real danger as I expected, except from great boys dashing their weight against you, and using you as a battering-ram or wedge for entering the crushes. It is thus, I imagine, that most accidents occur. I think it a very healthy exercise in fine autumn weather like this, but doubt its good in colder and damper days. Altogether, I hope that I shall like it. I enclose some edicts, to give you an idea of my kind of power in the management of the republic. I sit here, like Hildebrand in the Vatican, and make my house tremble as he did Europe with his thunders.’

[In a subsequent letter he records with obvious satisfaction that—

‘Yesterday I played in a house match and distinguished myself. I was the first to get what is called a base; that is, to carry a ball, kicking it into the enemy’s goal in spite of the attempts of the adverse party to stop you.’

The round of schoolboy life—reading in chapel for the first time, the Debating Society, hampers from home, lessons, Speech Day—finds ample illustration in Symonds’ letters; the details are observed and recorded with a precision which is

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte. Harrow, Oct. 3, 1857.



remarkable in a lad of seventeen. Characteristically, Symonds says little about his achievements. It would be difficult to gather from his correspondence that he was rising rapidly through the school, and was about to reach the Sixth Form far before the usual date. Indeed, even thus early in life what he had not occupied his attention far more than what he had, and there is foreshadowed that marked feature of his maturer years, the ceaseless striving forwards towards something new, to some region not yet explored.]

‘This evening <sup>1</sup> I had to read the first lesson, Proverbs xii. It was my first essay in the new chapel, and that, too, before a number of strangers and Harrow people. The reading-desk is a lectern. You stand one step above its base, and overlook the congregation. Your back is turned to the altar, the chancel, and all the people in it, so that you are between a double fire of eyes. I felt rather like a noisy reading-machine, and had very little appreciation of what I read. My fault was not that of false intonation, I am glad to say, but of too little strength of voice, which I hold to be no very great sign of bad performance in a new place, and one so inexperienced. I did not feel very nervous, only a coldness of the extremities, a want of sensibility, and a kind of mental estrangement. I am going on Tuesday to read with Mr. Smith in Pinner Church, and so get a little practice, and hope to come out strong some day or other. I think this is a good practice. It gives confidence, and prepares for public speaking.

‘I think I have never told you that I spoke in our debate on Tuesday last, on the subject of “The Reality of Ghosts.” I defended them, and made my speech a definition of their (to me) real character, which I upheld by papa’s story of Cromwell’s ghost in his lecture on sleep and dreams. Although I worked up the subject, and showed the growing influence of that apparition on Cromwell’s life, yet I am sorry to say that my audience were too sceptical. They derided me for unfounded assertions about females, and their influence on the fate of mighty nations.’

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte. Harrow, Nov. 15, 1857.

‘Thank<sup>1</sup> Edith very much for the parcel, which arrived quite safely on Friday. I can assure you we are doing justice to the tongue, and (cousin) James was invited last evening to partake of it. Also the biscuits were most delicious. Of course the frost is broken, now that I have my skates. It always does so, and yesterday I went down to football. It had been pouring, and was then mizzling with a sort of Scotch mist. The ground was in that condition that when the ball fell it gave a ‘thud’ into the water and mud, and spurted up little fountains all the same all round. It was really too much like pigs wallowing in the mire, and I thought of my favourite quotation from the “Palace of Art” about “the swine that range on yonder plain,” which I used to recite with such hearty goodwill, before I joined in the same wallowing.

‘This evening I have just done learning my Butler. He is the stupidest old creature ever seen, and I do not see why I should have all his ideas about the future state rammed down my throat, or be forced to profess (in school) those things and arguments conclusive and settled, which I do not at all see to be such. I think that such a book tends towards Calvinism or Atheism.’

‘Although<sup>2</sup> you will have a better account, I hope, of our Speech Day in the *Times*, I yet send you a little description of my own, with my own feelings. The day was glorious, but so hot that it was the greatest exertion to move. I kept quiet till twelve, and then, as the company began to arrive, went up and saw them going into Speech Room. Among the *distingués* present were the Bishops of Oxford, St. David’s, and Jamaica. Lord J. Russell, Lord Palmerston, Sir W. W. of Kars, Mme. Goldschmidt, and several other titles not worth recording. I then moved off and helped to join a double line from the school to the chapel, through which the visitors had to pass. The heat was awful. As soon as the visitors had passed, and got seated in the wooden amphitheatre, prepared for them to see the laying of the foundation stone of the new aisle, the whole school rushed down together over a set of sloping

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte. Harrow, January 31, 1858.

<sup>2</sup> To the same. Harrow, June 28, 1858.

terraces that lead to the new buildings. We were then cooped up in a small space and crushed, and, what was worse, glared upon by the sun to a dreadful extent. The ceremony was very interesting. Dr. V. read first a form of prayer for the occasion, and then a list of those Harrovians who had fallen in the war. Sir W. W. then mortared the stone and patted it, after which he made a speech. It was very nice, but too hesitating to sound well, and besides that I was nearly touching him. Lord Palmerston then made a speech of much the same character, but with greater fluency and style. His speaking disappointed me, since it consisted of a series of commonplaces disposed of in short barks; perhaps this unfavourable impression was owing to my near position and uncomfortable feelings. There was immense cheering for the celebrities. We then returned to Mr. R.'s *déjeuner*.<sup>1</sup>

[In his autobiography Symonds minimises both his athletic and his intellectual achievement at Harrow. He did not like the place; it did not suit his health, and he did not feel that he was spiritually growing there. This conviction remained throughout life, and was frequently expressed. But as we have seen that his place in school games was probably higher than he would acknowledge, so his record of intellectual honours was far in advance of anything which his letters or reminiscences would lead us to suppose; for example, that rare distinction the medal, 'ob studia uno tenore feliciter peracta,' which he was the first to win, is not mentioned once. An exceptionally brilliant boy he certainly was not, but one of his masters, Mr. Coker Adams, recorded of him that he was always a good and very painstaking pupil, far above the average, though not expected to acquire that distinction which he subsequently achieved.

The truth is that Symonds, like many boys of imaginative and intellectual temperament, was more concerned with his own fancies, thoughts, feelings, than with the main current of school life about him.]

At<sup>1</sup> this period of my boyhood, I dreamed a great deal

<sup>1</sup> Autobiography.

of my time away, and wrote a vast amount of idiotic verses. During the night-time I was visited by terrible and splendid visions, far superior to my poetry. In the long slow evolution of myself, it appears that the state of dreamful subconscious energy was always superior to the state of active intelligent volition. In a sense different from Charles Lamb's, I was a dream-child, incapable of emerging into actuality, containing potential germs of personality which it required decades to develop.

In this respect I was probably by no means singular. The situation might be summed up in one sentence: I was a slow-growing lad. The memory of my experience at Harrow, of my non-emergence, of my intense hidden life, of my inferiority in achievement, has made me infinitely tender towards young men in whom I recognised the same qualities of tardy laborious growth.

[The autobiography of the Harrow period is not copious. It closes upon the following incident, to which Symonds always attached the highest importance :]

We<sup>1</sup> were reading Plato's 'Apology' in the Sixth Form. I bought Cary's crib, and took it with me to London on an *excursion* in March. My hostess, a Mrs. Bain, who lived in Regent's Park, treated me to a comedy one evening at the Haymarket. I forget what the play was. When we returned from the play I went to bed and began to read my Cary's Plato. It so happened that I stumbled on the 'Phædrus.' I read on and on, till I reached the end. Then I began the 'Symposium'; and the sun was shining on the shrubs outside the ground-floor in which I slept before I shut the book up.

I have related these insignificant details, because that night was one of the most important nights of my life; and when anything of great gravity has happened to me, I have always retained a firm recollection of trifling facts which formed its context.

<sup>1</sup> Autobiography.

Here in the 'Phædrus' and the 'Symposium'—in the 'Myth of the Soul,' I discovered the revelation I had been waiting for, the consecration of a long-cherished idealism. It was just as though the voice of my own soul spoke to me through Plato. Harrow vanished into unreality. I had touched solid ground. Here was the poetry, the philosophy of my own enthusiasm, expressed with all the magic of unrivalled style.

The study of Plato proved decisive for my future. Coming at the moment when it did, it delivered me to a large extent from the torpid cynicism of my Harrow life, and controlled my thoughts for many years.

[It also begat a mood of dreaming which coalesced with the powerful though vague impression of beauty awakened by his Clifton home, and grew to be what Symonds himself in his later diaries calls his *Seelensehnsucht*, a 'Cliftonian state of yearning.' This mood became localised at Clifton, centred in the Cathedral, and invariably returned whenever he came back to his home from Oxford term time, from Welsh or Yorkshire reading parties, from tours in Italy, Belgium, Switzerland, or France.]

## CHAPTER IV

## YOUTH

Emotional development—Journeys in Scotland—Newhailes—Roslin—Hawthornden—Goes to Balliol—Friends at Oxford—Conington—‘Ploughed’ for ‘Smalls’—Exhibitioner at Balliol—Reading party at Whitby—Wins the ‘Newdigate’—Matthew Arnold’s criticism on the poem—First Class in ‘Moderations’—Reading party at Coniston—First journey abroad—On keeping diaries—His love of Bristol—Returns to Oxford—Mr. Jowett’s influence—Overwork—Ill health—Goes home to Clifton—Life there—Back at Balliol—A day of his life—Attitude towards religion—Health still bad—An *excursus* to Sonning—The Rev. Hugh Pearson—Stories of Tennyson—Journey to Amiens and Paris—Mario’s singing—Giuglini—Clara Novello—The *Stabat Mater*—The Venus of Milo—Returns home—Goes up to Oxford—Ill health—How he appeared to the outside world—Journey to Chamonix and Italy—His diary of this journey—First impressions of Switzerland and of Italy—The guide Auguste Balmat—Walks on the Glaciers—Crosses the Simplon—Lago Maggiore—Como—Milan—Novara—Bellinzona—The Gotthard—A nightmare at Hospenthal—Description of a thunderstorm at Clifton—Reading party at Bangor—Ill health—Home again—Lewes’s ‘Life of Goethe’—Its influence—His twenty-first birthday—Reflections thereon—A visit from Jowett—Self-analysis—Returns to Oxford—Visit to a phrenologist—Ill health—The shadow of the schools—Mme. Jenny Lind Goldschmidt—Lady Augusta and Dean Stanley—Wins the ‘Jenkyns’—Gets a First in ‘Greats’—His remarks on the Oxford system and its teachers.

1858 MARCH<sup>1</sup> came to an end, and brought this eventful term to its conclusion. In April I went to Clifton for the Easter holidays. The change from Harrow to my home always tranquillised and refreshed me. It renewed that sense of dignity, repose, and beauty in existence, which was absolutely necessary to my spiritual being.

This time I felt the change more strangely than usual. Clifton did not offer the same simple satisfaction as before. The recent quickening of my intellect, the revelation I had

<sup>1</sup> Autobiography.



found in Plato, removed me almost suddenly away from boyhood. I was on the verge of attaining to a man's self-consciousness. My ritualistic pranks at Harrow had had this much of reality in them that they indicated a natural susceptibility to the æsthetic side of religion. I felt a real affection, a natural reverence, for grey Gothic churches. The painted glass and heraldries, Crusaders cross-legged on their tombs, carved wood-work and high-built organ lofts, the monuments to folk long dead, over all the choiring voices, touched me to the quick at a thousand sensitive points. There was no real piety, however, in my mood. My soul was lodged in Hellas.

At this period of my youth I devoured Greek literature, and fed upon the reproductions of Greek plastic art with which my father's library was stored. Plato took the first place in my studies. I dwelt upon the opening pages of the 'Charmides' and 'Lysis.' I compared these with the 'Clouds' of Aristophanes, and the dialogues of Lucian and Plutarch. I explored Theognis and the anthology, learned Theocritus by heart, tasted fragments of Anacreon, and Ibycus, and Pindar. I did not reflect upon the incongruity between this impulse to absorb the genius of the Greeks, and the other impulse which drew me toward mediævalism. The 'Confessions of St. Augustine' lay side by side upon my table with a copy of the 'Phædrus.'

This confusion of ideas was grotesque enough; and gradually it introduced a discord into my life. Yet it marked a period of vigorous development. If the modern man is destined to absorb and to appropriate the diverse strains which make him what he is, some such fermentation cannot be avoided. He emerges from it with a mind determined in this way or that, and retains a vital perception of things that differ grounded in his personal experience.

My mental and moral evolution proceeded now upon a path which had no contact with the prescribed systems of education. I lived in and for myself. Masters, and school, and methods of acquiring knowledge lay outside me, to be used or neglected as I judged best. I passed my last term at Harrow between that April and the ensuing August in supreme indifference, and looked forward to the university without ambition.

In the summer vacation, before I went up to Oxford, I made a tour through Scotland. There were the Forbeses at Pitlochry, Dalrymple at Newhailes, Jamieson on the Gair Loch, the Forrests at Edinburgh, to be visited.

‘We<sup>1</sup> have been to Roslin and are come back, and I am sitting in my room. It is late and I am tired, therefore I shall not write much. We have had a charming day. We set off at a quarter to one and got by train to Hawthornden. Mr. and Mrs. J. Fergusson have a place on one of the sides of the glen at Hawthornden, looking straight over to the Castle and Chapel of Roslin. There we lunched. The woods are private property, and cover the whole sides of that deep and narrow ravine through which the Esk flows. Roslin stands at the head, Hawthornden at the foot of the glen, each built upon a most precipitous rock, and commanding a splendid view up their own parts of the ravine. The path was very steep and went straight down to the Esk, which we crossed by a bridge, whence a most splendid view of Hawthornden is to be got. You look up to an immense red cliff on which stands this old and irregular Castle. The walls go sheer down to the precipice and end in rocks beside the water. On each side the trees rise thick and green to a great height, broken occasionally by bits of cliff and caves. Every sort of the rarest ferns grow in these woods. Some of them I picked. These were *Dryopteris*, *Thegopteris*, several kinds of *Cystopteris dilatata*, Lady Fern, and many others I forget, all growing as thick and rank as the commonest *Filix Mas* in Leigh Woods. From the bridge we began to ascend, and walked in a slanting direction by the water to Roslin. As we passed along we had Wallace’s and Bruce’s caves pointed out to us, though I confess I could not see them, for they were high up on the other side and shaded with trees. However, I hardly ever remember a more charming walk. Roslin Chapel both exceeded and fell beneath my expectations. The architecture is so late and debased that one cannot be enthusiastic about it, but then its ornamentation and situation surpass anything I had ever seen. I could not have conceived such an

<sup>1</sup> To Miss Sykes. Newhailes, 1858.

immense variety and minuteness of tracery. Each arch and column is different ; one part of the roof, spangled with goodly stone stars, pleased me as much as any of the decorations. I mounted on a horrid swinging ladder to the top, which was being repaired. Having arrived there with some dizziness, I found myself the centre of attraction to a nest of bees who inhabit one of the pinnacles. The great height, the swing of the ladder and the attacks of the bees (who did not, however, sting me) almost made me lose my balance, and I beat a speedy retreat. However, I secured some ferns from the very top for Mdle. G. Exquisite maiden's-hair grew on the roof inside in festoons. It was a fatiguing day, and a long walk. But I found it very pleasant. We were such a merry party, and made so much fun. All the Misses F. are very nice girls, but quite the most amusing is called 'Hetty' (for Henriette). She is a perfect Hetty, always laughing and making some joke or other. I am so sorry to go to-morrow. They, too, had not expected so early a departure, but I must not waste time, and it is better to go ere people get tired of you. Good-night. Best love to papa and all.'

[The Trossachs, seen in a great rain-storm, call forth an observation upon grand scenery, 'It makes me melancholy to look at it. I do not know why, but fine scenery has that effect on me. It seems to elevate and at the same time to depreciate one's estimate of self.' The return journey was made by way of Carlisle and Manchester, where Symonds saw the first great loan collection of old masters.

The close of the year 1858 brought the important change from school to college. He was not yet eighteen ; he had already been some time in the Sixth ; Harrow had little more to give him ; he himself was anxious to leave, and both his father and Dr. Vaughan concurred. Symonds entered Balliol as a Commoner, and tried, though unsuccessfully, for a scholarship in November of his first term. He records his early impressions of Oxford life as follows :]

My<sup>1</sup> first feeling upon coming up to Balliol in the autumn

<sup>1</sup> Autobiography.

of 1858 was one of relief. The greater freedom of university as compared with school life, both as regards the employment of time and the choice of studies, suited my temperament. I was not one of those boys who, after hugely enjoying their career at Eton or Harrow, leave their hearts to some extent behind them. Nor, again, was I abandoning that prestige and flattering sense of self-importance which a popular head of the school resigns when he enters the ranks of freshmen in a first-rate college. I, on the contrary, had everything to gain and nothing to lose by the change.

Cambridge absorbed the majority of the Harrovians who went up to the universities. Consequently I was but poorly furnished with school friends. I began to make friends with freshmen—Urquhart, Duncan (afterwards Lord Camperdown), Stephens<sup>1</sup> (a nephew of the Lord Chancellor Hatherley), Malcolm (now a partner in Coutts's bank), Cecil Bosanquet (the brother of Gustavus), Cholmley Puller and Wright (two scholars of Balliol), Lyulph Stanley, and others whose names I find recorded in my diaries of that date. During my first term I also became acquainted with Edwin Palmer, Robinson Ellis, and Professor John Conington. These elder men introduced me to their several sets. I came thus early in my career to know people of distinction like Goldwin Smith, Charles Parker, Charles Pearson, Arthur Stanley, Albert Dicey, T. H. Green, Mark Pattison, Francis Otter, A. O. Rutson.

[As at Harrow so now at Oxford, Symonds' sister was still his chief correspondent. To her he sent frequent accounts of his rapidly expanding interests in life, his friends, his studies, his social surroundings.]

1859 'I<sup>2</sup> think you must have been expecting to hear from me lately, but I have been very busy the end of this week. Indeed I have only once heard from home, and had intended to warn you that letters overweighted will in future be opened and

<sup>1</sup> Late Dean of Winchester.

<sup>2</sup> To his sister Charlotte, Balliol, February 1859.

returned to the writers. Very often the Sunday letters I get from home are too heavy.

‘This last week I have been seeing a great deal of Mr. Conington ; he is so kind as to look after my composition, and still urges me to try for a scholarship at Corpus. Of course papa’s dislike to my doing that, and also my own liking for Balliol, prevent me at present from so doing. I now know well several men in college—Jamieson, Brodrick, Malcolm, Jefferson, Campion and I are perpetually together, and I should lose a great deal of them were I to change to C. C. They are all Eton men, and very gentlemanly, quiet companions, though not at all reading men. For this reason I see less of them than Jamieson. That is to say, I cannot be about with them in the mornings, &c.

‘On the whole, I find it difficult to know what to do about acquaintances here. One has either to keep up a great number, or lose several that one would like to have, as well as Brodrick and Company, who, on the other hand, are distracting from their non-reading turn. At Harrow I existed almost without associates till very late, and now I begin to despise myself, because I find how much I care to have them, and how much sacrifice this care is likely to produce. However, I suppose things settle themselves down, and we are shaped by destiny and circumstance in the choice of friends as in other things.’

‘I<sup>1</sup> am writing to you in Puller’s room on one of the most lovely mornings we have yet had. The sun is quite warm, and every trace of snow, “even to the last faint streak,” has disappeared, and I am beginning to think that I shall like the incoming of summer. You, I believe, sympathise with me about the decided superiority of winter over every other part of the year ; yet I think it is the winter of December and the early parts of January that I like. When the days grow longer and no warmer, and one has a disagreeable uncertainty of light about six o’clock—no firelight dusk before dinner, *e.g.*—is the time that plagues me most, for I anticipate that gradual rising of things, buds, and leaves, and flowers, and then a sultry pause, and then fruits and corn, and then yellow leaves, and all

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte (1859 ?).



that before the rest of winter comes again. It is the sense of flux and progress that makes a prospect from spring to winter so dreary; and I always connect it in my mind with that interminable Harrow Summer Term, and its all-pervading "buzziness" of heat.

'Do you think you could find out from Mrs. B—— where and when Mr. Congreve preaches, and whether he does preach regularly? Puller is very anxious to hear him, and wants me to go with him some day to London for that purpose. As the risk of my conversion to Positivism is extremely small, I should not mind it.'

The<sup>1</sup> association with Conington was almost wholly good. It is true that I sat up till midnight with him nearly every evening, drinking cup after cup of strong tea in his private lodgings above Cooper's shop near University. This excited and fatigued my nerves. But his conversation was in itself a liberal education for a youth of pronounced literary tastes.

My studies advanced so badly that I was plucked for Smalls in the spring of 1859. The examiner, D. B—— of Exeter, made me conjugate the Greek *εἶμι* 'to be,' and *εἶμι* 'to go,' tense by tense. This was perhaps rather severe upon any candidate for his *testamur* in Responsions. The examination, however, was meant to search our knowledge of the rudiments; and nobody can deny that an accurate knowledge of the Greek auxiliary verbs is a rudimentary requisite of scholarship. I failed to fulfil the condition, and deserved to be plucked. The test selected by Mr. D. B—— discovered the weakest point in my panoply, and paralysed a mind which, however quick and sympathetic, was never very self-controlled or ready at a pinch. To confuse me with the multiplication table would have been equally easy.

I did not greatly mind this rebuff. I had been gathering fritillaries in Magdalen meadows all the afternoon, and enjoying the sunset from the top of Magdalen Tower. The memory of that pleasant May day is fresher now than my recollection of the disagreeable news that I was 'plucked.' But I greatly

<sup>1</sup> Autobiography.



disliked having to go down to Clifton and tell my father that I had been 'ploughed in Smalls for Greek Grammar.' Fortunately, before the end of June, I had been elected, together with Charles Elton, to an open exhibition at Balliol. My father's wounded feelings were soon soothed by quite sufficient academical successes; and my own sense of duty in study was sharpened by the salutary snub inflicted on my not too stubborn vanity.

[At the end of the summer term of 1859, Symonds, T. H. Green, Rutson and Cholmley Puller went with Conington on a reading party to Whitby. They engaged a lodging-house kept by a woman called Storm, whom Conington christened *λαίλαψ*. Symonds was deeply impressed by the sternness of the place, 'the village churchyard' (he writes in the autobiography), 'full of monuments erected to captains and sailors of the name of Storm, many of whom had perished as whalers and fishers on the northern seas. The church itself, an old-fashioned edifice, built on the cliff's brow, with galleries in which the choir droned out hymns and anthems to the accompaniment of a stringed and brass band. It affected my imagination with the feeling of generations of shipwrecked seamen, as though it had been itself a hulk stranded up there, and redolent of marine reminiscences.'

The letters and diaries of the next year, 1860, show a marked advance in firmness of tone. It is quite clear that Symonds was growing rapidly, that his spirit was expanding in the Oxford atmosphere, that he keenly enjoyed its intellectual attractiveness in the society of able and distinguished men, its æsthetic charm in the antique splendour of its college services.]

'This morning,<sup>1</sup> when I went to fetch a book in Conington's room, there was a great assembly of distinguished people. I found him seated with Monro, a Cambridge man, and Henry Smith, who is the greatest universal genius Oxford has, and Currey, and a Lord Strangford, who has just returned from

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte. . February 5, 1860.

Constantinople full of the forgeries of Simonides. Whilst we were thus assembled, a Marlborough master, called Bright, son of a Dr. Bright, came in, and shortly after Goldwin Smith, bringing his lecture, which I am about to send to papa. This completed the gallery of celebrities. Their conversation was very interesting. G. S. speaks like a book, and delivered most sententious dicta on many subjects, chiefly political.

‘I have to go off as fast as I can, chapel having intervened, to dine at Pembroke.’

‘Yesterday<sup>1</sup> I had a very intellectual breakfast : Conington, Rutson, Green, Tollemache, Dicey, Lyulph Stanley, and Puller. I find these breakfasts formidable things ; for there is a succession of meats, all of which I have to dispense, to change plates, and keep people going with fresh forks and knives, &c. It is not the custom for any scout to be in attendance, so that the host has to do all menial offices. You would be amused to see these intellectual men begin with fried soles and sauces, proceed to a cutlet, then taste a few sausages or some savoury omelette, and finish up with buttered cake or toast and marmalade. Up to the sweet finale coffee is the beverage ; and tea, coming when hunger has abated, prolongs breakfast *ad infinitum*.

‘I went for a ride yesterday afternoon with Rutson, not feeling very well. We were taken in the most furious snow-storm I ever was in ; there was a strong wind driving, and the snow came into our eyes and mouth, and down our necks and up our arms. It was at its height when we were on Port Meadow ; floods were out, and what with half-frozen bogs and sheets of water, and the inability to see anything on account of this snow, our chances of returning undrowned or with whole horses were slight. We did, however, succeed in piloting ourselves to Wolvercote, and thence spurred home in miserable plight. It was vexatious, for when one does indulge in a ride, one expects to get pleasure and good by it.

‘I have been reading some of Kingsley’s “Miscellanies,” and have been utterly disgusted with one on Shelley and Byron ; he makes the most odious preferences for manly over senti-

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte. March 11, 1860.

mental vices, and preaches on poor Shelley as full text and type of the latter. Besides the injustice and the repulsiveness of the matter, one felt insulted by the man's loose writing. These Essays seem to have got together somehow, but to have followed no distinct plan—maybe to have been jotted down in the saddle by some cover. Such slap-dash writing is not unpleasant in other Essays, where he talks of sport and rural delights, but it jars on my taste when used as the vehicle of such wholesale and unfounded criticisms on poets like Shelley, and on the age that reads him.'

'I<sup>1</sup> have just come from taking composition to Jowett, who talked to me about my Moderations. He gave me hope, blowing a trumpet-blast of determination. Such a man was never found, so great to inspire confidence and to rouse to efforts. Other people may prate for hours, and set the pros and cons before you, yet never stir your lethargy. By a single word, with no argument but a slight appeal to the natural powers of most men, and a plea for work as work, he makes one feel that to be successful is the only thing short of dishonour.

'It is good to hear a man of such broad and unprejudiced views: Conington is the reverse; great in his own way, but the way narrow. Conington is stationary: he has cut out his notions, and will obstinately keep to them.

'Jowett says that my only thought till Mods. must be my work. I shall therefore not bring home with me any of my genealogical apparatus; the rules I laid down for reading must be steadily adhered to, and herein help me; all byways of literature must be carefully eschewed, hard.

'Such are the resolutions roused by Jowett's trumpet, how long to last?'

[The letters from which the preceding extracts have been gathered make it quite clear that Symonds thoroughly enjoyed the epistolary form of expression. Witness to this fact would be borne by those hundreds of correspondents with whom he came into epistolary contact during his later years. Talking and letter-writing were, indeed, the forms of intellectual

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte. March 16, 1860.

exercise which yielded him most delight. Even as early as January 1858, while he was still at Harrow, he had professed himself 'a great lover of old letters,' and upon letter-writing in general he now puts out his views to his sister Charlotte as follows :]

'I<sup>1</sup> wish you would pay more attention to the writing of letters. I am not the proper person to read you a sermon upon this subject, because I do not think that the specimens I send you are at all what letters should be. Yet I labour under the disadvantage of writing to a mixed audience. You have only me to talk to, and, moreover, being a lady, are perhaps more bound to write good letters. I think you should consider more to whom you are writing, in each instance, and try to say something suitable to the tastes, &c. of the individual. It is quite a mistake to suppose that one ever needs subject-matter in writing a letter. I think those are most interesting which detail least of daily affairs, but, taking one occurrence as a kind of text, go on and discourse upon collateral points of interest. The younger Pliny, who was one of the most graceful of all letter-writers, recommends a friend to be careful not to write journals in letters. I daresay you think this contradictory of my craving after news ; it does sound so, but yet much news may be conveyed without formal statement, the more so if you are careful to select such news as will be especially interesting to your correspondent. Letters might be raised into an intellectual exercise ; and, if you took to view them in that light, I do not think that an hour or so spent upon one would be any waste. You ought to be looking out sharp now for any mental fillip or stimulus. I think you are very much like myself in possessing a generally listless and inactive intellect, and one which requires constant goading and keeping up to the mark. I only hope that by lying in wait for it perpetually, and keeping it in exercise, it may eventually become less flaccid than it is at present. On the other hand, I doubt whether inherent weakness can be eradicated by any exercise. I always fancy that want of concentration and feebleness of comprehension are the

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte. May 27, 1860.

result of some softness and nervelessness in the texture of my brain ; so much has this idea sometimes possessed me that I have wished to become a physiologist for the mere purpose of studying the conditions of the brain and endeavouring to connect them with mental energies, &c.

‘I should not be babbling so much were it not Sunday. This afternoon I hope to hear “The Heavens are Telling” at Magdalen. That chorus is the grandest interpretation of “light” that has ever been conceived. Its restless radiation, the full broad centre of sound from which those brilliant undulations are continually darting forth, the bounding flux and reflux of its changes—all this seems perfectly to represent the vital energy and ceaseless motion of light, as coming from the sun, or in the cycles of the planets. In Beethoven’s great Hallelujah we have the gradual development of infant worlds, but in Haydn’s Chorus the whole universe has just been set in ceaseless motion by the first utterance, “Let there be light.” By the way, do you know how clergymen invariably proceed to “And there *was* light”? This should certainly be read, “And there was—Light.”’

‘I<sup>1</sup> ought not to be writing just now, for last Sunday I did nothing to the Gospels. Yet I cannot help scribbling a little to tell you of a charming ride I had on Friday with Rutson. It was a delicious summer day ; we started at half-past four, riding along Port Meadow, and through fields that still skirted the river, with Wytham Woods upon our left. By this route we got about seven miles of uninterrupted grass land, covered with cowslips and burning marigolds. The fields seemed quite deserted, and we saw nothing but pheasants or partridges running from their cover, with now and then a plover making melancholy human cries. So, soon we came to Bablock Hythe, a place celebrated in Matthew Arnold’s “Scholar Gypsy,” a solitary house guarding a ferry ; here we crossed in a broad horse boat, and rode on to Stanton Harcourt. I had often wished to see the graves of the Harcourts in this church, the room where Pope is said to have lived, and the great mediæval kitchen, still black with smoke. The first thing,

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte. May 6, 1860.



however, was to get some dinner for ourselves, and stabling for our horses. We found a little inn, but alas! found neither stablemen nor dinner. There were two stalls for horses in a shed, one empty, the other filled with straw. Rutson's horse was honoured with the empty stall; I took a pitchfork, and dispossessed the straw from the other for my beast. Having taken off bridles and saddles we foraged for hay and corn, which at last we found; and so returned to the inn kitchen, tired and dusty. Soon, however, we discovered that it provided less accommodation for man than the stables for beast; a loaf of bread was its only eatable. Food for contemplation there was plenty in the churchyard, and its splendid yew. The church itself is beautiful—a much restored specimen of pure Early English. Some of the Harcourt tombs are most elaborate—one especially of ancient painted stone tabernacle-work. Others were flat, with knights and ladies all in rows—their dress and armour, shields and crests and helmets, gorgeously emblazoned. Everywhere hung coronets, with the Harcourt peacock drooping his long tail behind the helmet; the arms of Harcourt and of Byron shone conspicuous. They give the most gorgeous combinations of colour that heraldry can boast—gold and crimson, silver and crimson, in alternate bars and bends.

‘As we returned, Bablock Hythe was even calmer and more beautiful than it had been before. The perfect sunset reflection on the one hand, the moon on the other, as we crossed the Weir, seemed to fill even our steeds with calm and poetry. They went more gently. We reached Oxford a little before ten. I was very tired and exhausted. The only eatable to satiate my hunger (before a visit for composition to Jowett at a quarter-past ten) was buttered toast and coffee. On this somewhat bilious diet I buoyed myself up to discuss my own Iambics.

‘I enjoyed the expedition exceedingly; it made me long more and more that I had some friend of my own age at Clifton. Had I my own way, I would willingly transport about three of my Oxford friends, and place one in the Crescent and another in Cornwallis Grove; that so I might



have companions for long walks, or that often-contemplated moonlight expedition to Leigh Woods. The latter I must accomplish in the summer.

‘Mind, what I say about wishing for Oxford friends at Clifton does in no way diminish the full perfection of home. I need some attendant in those places only where my dear sister cannot go. As it is, if I had my choice between the two, I would rather live at home, with solitude and cherub contemplation, when I walk about, than stay at Oxford with fifty devoted friends.’

‘I<sup>1</sup> have been amused just now by the visit of a very High Church acquaintance of mine, who came in redolent of incense. He had been to a friend’s rooms, who is of the same persuasion, and found him at service. “Accordingly,” said he, “I vested myself in my sky-blue cassock, then I put on a white chasuble with gold border; after that the stole and maniple; and, lastly, the beretta. Thus attired, we went through the service.” To think of the absurdity of these men. He went on to describe how he had a “trptych” with ruby-glass doors, containing an ivory crucifix on an ebony stand, and how his incense cost seven shillings the pound, and how he had clothed a Welsh choir with “due vestments” as an Easter offering, and how his cousin the Abbot had made seven proselytes to the “true faith.” I had thought the Tractarian humbug had died, and given way to philosophical cant of infidelity; but it seems that the very dregs and offscourings of Oxford youth still rock themselves upon this nonsense. . . .’

‘This<sup>2</sup> morning I went to hear Stanley preach the Assizes sermon: the judges’ procession and trumpets burst upon me for the first time, but the clangour of the latter was inferior to my expectations, and decidedly surpassed by Stanley’s brazen bidding prayer. There is a great charm to me in hearing that gradual dissection of the Universal Church: it becomes sublime at the ‘seminaries of sound learning,’ ‘and herein Oxford,’ with the long roll of Christ Church benefactors—kings and cardinals, archbishops and noblemen. Stanley has

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte. June 3, 1860.

<sup>2</sup> To the same, 1860.

an unusually long list, for he prays likewise for University and for Balliol—for “John de Balliol and Dervorguilla his wife,” as well as for “Thomas à Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, for Henry the Eighth, for Thomas Wolsey, Cardinal and Archbishop of York, for the Lord Clarendon,” for knights innumerable, and doctors of divinity without limit. Such enumerations come sweeping by with pall and sceptre, and remind one of the line of Banquo’s kings—our only ideas of them being phantoms of our own creation.

‘I am so tired and so lamentably dismal about my work for Moderations, that I do not know what will become of me. I forget everything that I read and have read, and am now unable even to read with understanding, so that I am beginning to dread that my Mods. will have to be put off till the autumn.’

In <sup>1</sup> the summer term of 1860 I won the Newdigate Prize for an English poem on the Escorial. It was recited in the Theatre on June 20. Conington, who did not believe (and very rightly, perhaps, did not believe) in my gift as a poet, was curiously perplexed by this occurrence. He had twice competed for the Newdigate without success. Gifted with an extraordinary memory, he declaimed to me, on one interminable evening, his two unsuccessful poems, together with the two which won the prizes—four Newdigates in all—two inedited and two in print. It was a colossal occasion, called forth by the unexpected good luck of my littleness. When I came to recite my poem in the rostrum, Matthew Arnold, then our Professor of Poetry, informed me very kindly, and in the spirit of sound criticism, that he had voted for me, not because of my stylistic qualities, but because I intellectually grasped the subject, and used its motives better and more rationally than my competitors. This sincere expression of a distinctive judgment was very helpful to me. It gave me insight into my own faculty, and preserved me from self-delusion as to its extent.

[Apropos of this success Symonds wrote to his friend Mr. Stephens, ‘I am reduced to the last stage of self-loathing

<sup>1</sup> Autobiography.

by being lauded for what I cannot help despising. Yet I succumb, and suffer people to read "The Escorial" as if it were a new idyll with which Tennyson might electrify the world. Some people imagine that it is a final classical first: they have to be undeceived.'

In the same term Symonds obtained a first-class in Moderations, and so was immediately started upon his work for the final schools in Litteræ Humaniores—philosophy, logic, history.

For the summer vacation Conington formed a reading party, which included Symonds and Green. They went to live in a farmhouse upon the Lake of Coniston, facing the shore which Ruskin has since made famous. Thence Symonds writes to Mr. Stephens:—"Green is coaching me in Plato. He does it well, for he knows an immense deal about the Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy, as well as about modern systems. On the other hand, because he is a very original thinker, he does not express himself quite as clearly and fluently as such beginners as myself would like. The spirit of Plato's philosophy is surprising to me, who had never conceived to what an extent Christianity had been anticipated by Socrates. But it is the constant search for the Real over the Seeming, for Truth as Truth, which strikes me with such new light.' Here then, from the study of Plato, we find Symonds imbibing for the first time that passion for the absolute, that dislike of the relative which controlled his intellectual growth, and to which we shall find him recurring again and again in his maturer speculations upon Life and Conduct.

To Mr. Stephens he sent this further account of his work: 'My reading may be divided into three sections—"deep," "middling," and "shallow." In the "deep" department the "Phædrus" and the "Phædo," and perhaps Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus. My "middling" studies have been chiefly in Swiss history. Germany in the eleventh and twelfth centuries was as tangled as the Gordian knot, and, in modern phraseology, I am minded to "cut" the whole thing. My "shallow" reading has fallen much on music. Besides "Consuelo," I have been interested in a strange novel of Miss Disraeli's. It is called "Charles Anchester"; it is a romantic history of Mendelssohn,

Hullah, and many eminent modern performers. I daresay you have read the Shelley memorials. It seems impossible that anything new can be said about him. "Requiescat in pace." Let us hope they won't go on stirring up his bones.']

A<sup>1</sup> trifling incident occurred at Coniston, when on this reading party with Conington, which I shall relate, because it is more powerfully imprinted on my memory than all the other details of those weeks. I had been talking to S — upon a grey stone wall tufted with *Cystopteris* and *Ruta muraria*, the ordinary fern-grown sort of wall which divides fields in the Lake District. When twilight fell he went off to his lodging and his loves. I returned to the little room in the farmhouse where I pursued my studies. There I sat and read. Conington and Green were conversing in the paved kitchen, used by us as a dining-room, and perhaps they were not conscious of my presence. There was only a door between the two chambers. Conington said—'Barnes will not get his First.' (They called me Barnes then, and I liked the name, because they chose it.) 'No,' said Green, 'I do not think he has any chance of doing so.' Then they proceeded to speak about my æsthetical and literary qualities, and the languor of my temperament. I scraped my feet upon the floor and stirred the table I was sitting at. Their conversation dropped, but the sting of it remained in me; and though I cared little enough for first-classes, I then and there resolved that I would win the best first of my year.

This kind of grit in me has to be notified. Nothing roused it so much as a seeming slight, exciting my rebellious manhood. It was the same spur, as when my Harrow tutor wrote home of me, 'wanting in vigour both of body and mind'; and Conington once more, in the course of a long Clifton walk, remarked upon my 'languor,' and Jowett told me I had 'no iron to rely upon,' and F — M — said, I had 'worked myself out in premature culture,' and an M.P. at Mr. North's indulgently complimented me on 'writing for the magazines.' All these excellent people meant little by what they said, and

<sup>1</sup> Autobiography.

assuredly forgot soon what fell so lightly from their lips. But they stimulated my latent force by rousing antagonism.

The autumn of this year, 1860, before I returned to Balliol, was spent in a Belgian tour with Charles Cave, my sister Edith his wife, and my sister Charlotte, and upon the top of this, a rapid scamper with my father through Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Salzburg, Munich. The diary of these travels I possess, and it shows how hard I worked at art and nature.

[The diary opens thus : 'I am going to begin a diary again in order to record my doings. Last time I kept a journal was between Jan. 17 and Sept. 25 of 1858. I have it still, and love it as a record of many happy days. The pleasure I have taken in it since ought to have made me more regular in noting down the daily occurrences and feelings of these years. Yet I think there needs unity of subject to keep up the interest of a journal. I must hope that our travels will supply one.' The book is an extraordinary record of activity and absorption. Everything is studied, noted, compared, recorded to the full ; nothing is omitted ; a headache which prevented Symonds from being fully alive to the treasures of the Antwerp Museum, is bitterly resented. Music, Architecture, and Italian pictures are the main subjects of his descriptions and reflections ; and through all runs a note of keen enjoyment, which was characteristic of his nature when ill-health or overwork did not interfere. It is thus that he appeared to others, and thus, no doubt, he really was when not engaged in analysing himself. This note of keen enjoyment remained with him through life, and made him the brilliant, vivacious, stimulating companion he ever was. So careful, so accurate was his habit that this journal, covering 233 pages of a small note-book, is indexed at the end with a list of hotels, churches, public buildings, pictures, and notes of expenditure. The diary, so diligently kept, seems to have confirmed a natural tendency to this form of self-expression. On Thursday, October 11, 1860, or two days after the close of his travel-records, he began a series which was virtually never laid aside till the day before his



death. The diary of October 11 opens thus: 'It is rather adventurous to begin keeping a journal, after so many failures, and without the unity of subject which I thought so necessary to make the trouble endurable. Yet, as I consider a diary useful as a mechanical memory, and interesting personally for the future, I shall attempt to keep one. The custom of writing when abroad will make it easier to do so here, and my "unity of subject" must be esoteric. The journey was decidedly historical and exoteric. This I will try to make more a record of what passes in myself and my more private concerns. Herein, however, let me determine to avoid any essay-writing on these pages. One journal begun at Oxford failed thus. Also, let me not strive too conscientiously after recording conversations. This bad habit made another too tedious for continuance.'

Symonds had come back from his tour fully prepared to test his beloved Bristol by the famous cities and buildings which he had just visited. 'On entering the Cathedral,' he writes, 'and seeing its beautiful bare aisles, I felt the whole superiority of English architecture over Belgian, and even over German. The massive mullions and exquisite tracery of the windows, the grand roofing with its clustered spandrels and lacy boss-work, the harmony of the parts produced by greater length, the purity of the bay-arches and their moulded columns—all combine to exalt Bristol Cathedral over any I have seen abroad'; and he adds, what is obviously true at this time of his life: "*Cælum non animum mutant qui trans mare currunt.*" I tested the view from the roof of the muniment room at St. Mary's, Redclyffe, and remain convinced of its superiority over Ghent or Bruges.' He enlarges on the same topic to Mr. Stephens, in a letter which is overflowing with affection for his home, for Clifton and Bristol. 'It gives me more pleasure to sit in Bristol Cathedral than in the Duomo at Milan, though the latter's transept aisles could hold the former, roof and tower and all. When you come to us I shall make you understand why the peculiar intricacies of arch and groined vaults—subtle as a Mass in D by Beethoven—have more influence over me than the bare illimitable space of



gorgeous foreign churches. I cannot understand why some people think size necessary to magnificence. Quality alone affects me; I am ludicrously ignorant of quantity.'

The winter term of 1860 at Oxford which followed this journey was one of very great strain, both mental and emotional. The diary, with its constant records of breakfasts, luncheons, dinners, abundantly prove that he was sought for socially. The inner circle of his friends—Conington, Palmer, Puller, Ollivant, Vickers, Green, Stephens—absorb an immense amount of his time and energy. He sits with them till late at night, or rather early in the morning, discussing such feverish subjects as 'The Universe,' or 'Moral Conduct,' or 'Mesmerism,' or 'Love,' with the result that entries like the following become frequent: 'I am feeling very ill—my memory weak—my head heavy—my limbs dragging—my whole being low.' And no wonder. Intellectually two men, Conington and Jowett, were working him very hard; emotionally, his friends were wearing him out, while the conduct of one of them brought him face to face with a problem of morals which was no longer abstract, but concrete, the solution of which compelled him to define his own views, and precipitated all his earlier speculations in the region of the affections.

It was at this period that the influence of Mr. Jowett began to make itself markedly felt. As Symonds had already taken a first in Moderations and was reading for the final schools, he naturally came more directly under the notice and the tuition of the Professor of Greek. He attended lectures on the 'Republic,' of which he says little, and wrote frequent essays to be read to his lecturer. Of these he says much. The figure of Mr. Jowett runs all through the diary of this period; with his brief, weighty, pregnant remarks, and his touches of kindness where he thought that his trenchant criticism had wounded a sensitive nature. 'I took an essay on "Historical Evidence" to Jowett. I had spent pains upon it, and was pleased on the whole with his reception of it, though he chid me for ornaments and mannerisms of style.' There is more about this essay a little further on. 'After dinner the Essay Society in my rooms. Green, Rutson, Buller, Bryce present.

Dacey came in after I had read my essay on "Historical Evidence." I felt its poverty as I read, and still more so when we discussed. Perhaps this, and the cold way with which Conington received some translations I had done my best by, makes me feel so mentally inferior as I do to-night. I look round me and find nothing in which I excel. It is desire for many things and appreciation of some. Yet those who care for such powers less and have them more, are strong and happy. What is it? and where is comfort? Oh, not here—yet if not here, then where? Do I know anything beyond this "here" and this "myself"? In neither of them can I find consolation, and I do not feel that there is aught beyond. Perhaps I feel there is, but I know nothing; and what I feel is more a dread than a hope.'

'After lunch to hear Mat. Arnold on Translating Homer. A good lecture, and full of impudence.' 'Walk with Conington to Bagley Wood. Interesting talk about religious doubts—I thought all doubt led up to the great doubt about God.' 'Tait and I met at eight to read essay on the Eleatics to Jowett. Tait read first, while Jowett gave me tea. Jowett was pleased with his essay. Then I read mine, which was elaborate. He interrupted me several times to talk, but at the end seemed pleased; he said: "That is very good, Mr. Symonds, a good essay"; nor did he make any strictures on the style or mannerism, with the exception of the use of "Generally" in opening the subject. . . . Then he gave me a lecture on Hegel. He thinks him marvellous in metaphysical distinction, practical acumen, and poetry. His theory, one in which the existence of a universal God is to be seen in all things and thought. Distinct personalities are allowed by this God to exist under and independent of Him. This I had not understood from Hegel. The view I had got of our being limited parcels of divinity, destined to be resolved, he called Spinozism.' The next entry is: 'I passed a very bad night, and am feeling ill.' That was on November 10, and six days later came a telegram from his father, Dr. Symonds, 'Pray give up all study at once.' The Master, Dr. Jenkyns, was quite willing to assent to this proposal, and to allow Symonds to go down, and Mr. Jowett

promised 'to send me some of his lectures, and offered a large book of them, clasped and locked.'

The strain of all this emotional and intellectual life was indeed more than Symonds's delicate constitution could support. The only reliefs from the besetting problems of conscience and the bewildering conundrums of philosophy were walks to Bagley Wood or Iffley, or in Magdalen—where the process was continued, not suspended—uncongenial gymnastics at Maclaren's, and music at Magdalen and New, which, though it soothed for the moment, really served to feed the emotional fires which were consuming him. On November 24 he went home.

But that which was wearing him out could not be escaped by a flight from Oxford. The process which was exhausting him was the formation of his own character; he carried all the elements of the ferment with him to his home. 'In hopes of keeping *mens sana in corpore sano*,' he says, 'I have made these rules for home life:

'1. To walk to the Sea Walls, or at least that distance, every day.

'2. To attend no cathedral service except on Sundays and Christmas Day.

'3. To read (if I can) from 9.30 till 1, from 4.30 till 6, from 10 till 11.

'4. To go to bed at 11, rise at 7.30.

'5. To drink no strong tea or coffee, and take only one glass of sherry at dinner.'

But in spite of these excellent resolves, he did not grow stronger. 'It is idle to record each of these languid days,' he writes, 'the reading in the morning, the stupid walk in the wet afternoon, and the dull evening.'

On December 10, term being over at Oxford, Conington came to stay at Clifton Hill House. 'After lunch walk to Sea Mills, and round by river. Conington told me that he had heard from Halford Vaughan (who inspected the depositions before Lord Eldon) that the judge could not have acted otherwise, so immoral had Shelley's life been. This tallies with what the Miss Shelleys said, that the less people inquired into their brother's life the better.' A dinner party is recorded in

which the conversation turned on ghosts, magic, witchcraft, spiritualism, and curious astronomical theories, 'which of course made Conington stonily silent. He can talk of nothing but Oxford, books, and some sorts of politics.'

The life at Clifton was full and varied, had Symonds's health been adequate to the enjoyment of it, had his whole mind and all his feelings not been already engaged and absorbed by the problems which Oxford life had brought to an acute point. The walls of Clifton College were beginning to rise, and young Symonds was taken to see the plans of those buildings, with which he was subsequently so closely connected. Dr. Symonds's house was always full of company, and that of the best. But though these things are noted in the diary, the record of ill health, 'bad, depressed headache,' 'painful reveries,' 'weary dreams,' 'weak and melancholy,' occupy the prominent place. He does his best to enjoy: 'I have spent my Christmas-tide on the whole pleasantly. The cold clear weather, the morning bells when dressing, the presents, the service—all were cheery. But for this *Sehnsucht* I should be happy.' But this is followed by 'Very nervous at night. Went to Auntie and got some *Nepenthe*, which did not do much good.'

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So this vacation came to an end with the following entry: 'I go back to Oxford to-morrow, and have just concluded my vacation's reading. Is it satisfactory? Tolerably. I have analysed the 'Republic,' read two books of Thucydides, written an essay for the Stanhope, and three essays on Chatterton. Considering my state of health, morbid condition of mind, and many interruptions, this is good. I am very sorry to go away, even though I have been so awfully dismal here.'

The effort he was making to go the way he thought right is made abundantly clear through all the journal of this period. As he himself notes: 'At the beginning of last vacation I made rules, which I kept pretty well. Read as much as I intended, I could and might not. Go to bed as regularly, I could not. But I did not drink beer at dinner, nor did I ever go to a morning cathedral service, much as I longed to. This term let me make some rules.

'1. To go to bed at 11.

'2. To go to Maclaren's<sup>1</sup> when I can, and always take some exercise.

'3. To read from 10 till 2, 5 till 5.30, 8 till 10.

'4. To drink no beer in hall, but try and take some at lunch.'

How full his intellectual life at Balliol really was may be illustrated by this account of a single day, taken from his diary :

'*Sunday, Jan. 27, 1861.*—Breakfasted with L. Stanley, and had an amusing party. Met Owen—old Balliol man, returned from Bombay College—Wordsworth, Green, Jackson, Ford, Wright, White, Bethel. Talked about "Essays and Reviews," and the storm brewing for them; about Jowett's parentage—Ford knows his mother and sister slightly, they live at Torquay; then of De Quincey, without some allusion to whom I hardly remember any intellectual Oxford breakfast go off; then about historic portraits—Wycliffe's at Balliol, Chaucer's from an old illumination, Dante's in the Arundel Society's publications. Sat on till 11.15. I went and wrote a long letter to papa about myself.

'Green came up to lunch, and we went to hear the Bishop<sup>2</sup> at St. Mary's. Full to overflowing. Preached from the text, "For all that He did so many miracles, yet they believed not on Him." I knew he would level at the Essayists, and, from the text, expected more than came. It was a general harangue against neglect of Revelation, considered in four lights—kinds, causes, consequences, cures thereof. The kinds were three, as resulting from pride of the world, pride of the flesh, pride of intellect. And each of these three kinds he treated with regard to the last three divisions of his subject. Therefore the Essayists only came in for the third part of the abuse; but he gave it them strong. His peroration to the consequences was fine. He spoke of men who, trusting to their own reason, thought they could elevate themselves into a purer atmosphere, leave behind for the vulgar a belief in the Crucified, and hold direct communion with the unapproachable God.

'More oratory than argument.

<sup>1</sup> Gymnasium.

<sup>2</sup> Wilberforce.



‘Then to Magdalen. Service begins to-day. “Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem,” Hayes. For voluntary, “Fallen is the foe.”

‘After hall, read “Alastor” through, and felt its truth. How strange it is that the pictures it produced in my mind when I heard papa read it long ago, and could not have understood it, are still vivid, nor do I get beyond them. Query, would such vivid pictures be suggested by a new poem now?

‘Went out to see C. B., who was not at home. Went to Holford B.’s room, and heard him play Beethoven.’

Such a day as this, begun in keen conversation with the best of his contemporaries, carried on through a powerful sermon by Wilberforce, and ending with Shelley’s ‘Alastor’ and Beethoven, is quite sufficient to account for the entry of the following date: ‘Very bad night. Unable to do anything in the morning.’ And the passages quoted above do not record anything exceptional in the tenor of Symonds’s Balliol career. He is keenly alive to all that is going on round him, and every event is recorded, often with a touch of humour in his impatience of dullness. ‘Breakfast with Jowett. Met a stupid man called S—— S——, who spoiled every effort at conversation by insisting on talking about Miss Eagle and ventriloquists.’

About this time Symonds took to riding again. It was an exercise which always gave him pleasure, and from it he derived much benefit to his health. He writes to his aunt, Miss Sykes: ‘I am feeling the benefit of my rides; they take away the fanciful headaches and depression, making me more fresh, but, I fear, more idle. I get sleepy, and read less than I might; enough, perhaps, to be good for me.’ This is the record of his second outing: ‘Rode to Woodstock with R——, a short ride, and rather stupid, for he would talk about miracles and Jowett, and would not ride fast’; and this is followed by ‘Rode alone to Stowe Wood, Stanton St. John, Forest Hill. Stupid riding alone, both for man and beast.’

It would seem that at this period Symonds was in the throes of religious contention, which, under the influence of his philosophical studies for Greats, had assumed in him a highly intellectual form.



‘Went to Communion, and found it seemed to do me good. Immediately after to hear the Bishop preach. Very fine sermon directed against doubt of portions of Revelation, as leading eventually to doubt of all Revelation—intellectual paralysis, moral weakness.’

In the following letter to his sister, while regretting the decline of his pleasure in music, he tries to estimate the loss in the region of æsthetic enjoyment, which results from the admission of doubt:

‘None <sup>1</sup> of the musical services are much worth hearing, for Magdalen is not recommenced. After the inflexibility with which I avoided our week-day Cathedral service, I feel half inclined to make some such rule for Oxford. I must think about it, because, though it takes up time to go to Magdalen, still it is sometimes a great refreshment. I have lost, to my humiliation be it said, much of the pleasure I took in music. The enjoyment is less spontaneous and less suggestive. I analyse and try to enjoy more; I have fewer ideas and less delight in hearing. A great many things must have combined to produce this result, but chiefly a less firm belief in the supernatural. Airy music and dark aisles inspire far deeper enthusiasm when the church is peopled with myriads of unseen angels. I believe that half of what may be called natural, emotional poetry comes from a belief of something in the Unseen. A tree is a tree, but when a Dryad haunts it, it is something more. So a star is a star till one of Raphael’s angels guides it, or its spirit hovers over Hymenæus. For the same reason we feel that what Masson would call subjective descriptions of nature are far higher than any gorgeous word-painting. The simple scene, “when sundown skirts the moor,” seen through the glass of Tennyson’s melancholy doubt, is worth a whole landscape of Thompson’s nature-copying, simply because a power, a spirit, has been put into the lonely heath, and sinking sun, congenial with the poet’s spirit.’

Symonds’s speculations upon religious subjects were keenly stimulated by the sermons of Bishop Wilberforce, and, as was

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte. January 20, 1861.

habitual with him, in the vigour of his intellectual sincerity, he carried those speculations fast and far.

‘The<sup>1</sup> Bishop preached a magnificent sermon yesterday on “doubting.” I have never heard anything from him so powerful : indeed, I think I have never heard such a grand sermon from any one. It was chiefly rhetorical—starting on the old premises of the Church’s dogmas and the Bible. From this premise his conclusions were unassailable. However, it did not pretend to be argumentative. It was an impassioned warning to young men, bidding them not let in the thin end of the wedge of scepticism. He told them that the admission of doubts on subjects of pure criticism and history would lead to metaphysical doubts, and end in doubt of God. This seemed to me to be the line of his argument, when stripped of its illustration. Therefore, the theory was that religion is a thing of the heart, into which intellect may not penetrate without blunting itself and killing the heart.

‘I think he is right here. Many a man begins by doubting the eternity of punishment ; and then, believing in his right to exercise private judgment, can find the doctrine of the Trinity nowhere in the Bible. The habit of appealing to Reason once gained, and strengthened and supplied with food by philosophical studies, he comes to apply the test of Reason to higher mysteries—that of the Incarnation ; that, finally, of the existence of a God. Each step has been destructive—as it must be, if men try to understand dogmas which their powers pronounced unintelligible. For a time such a man lives without God in the world. If he has a weak moral instinct, bad training, a strong temptation, he may in this period give way to sin and lead a life of careless crime. If he is earnest and of moral purpose, he comes in the end “to find a higher faith his own.” He sees he cannot live without God, and that Christianity is the most satisfying human embodiment of this necessity of God. All do not reach this higher faith ; and for this reason, I suppose, the Bishop wages war against the beginning of even a healthy scepticism.’

It is remarkable that Symonds, while occupied with the

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte. February 4, 1861.

subject of dogmatic scepticism, should have turned his attention instinctively, for a time at least, to natural science, as though he divined that the battle-ground lay there. He writes to his aunt :

‘ Among my studies at present is a new one—that of brains. I have been attending a course of Rolleston’s lectures, and feel pretty competent to differentiate a monkey’s from a man’s “cerebral hemisphere.”’

‘ To-morrow I am to go and inspect one closely, and dissect a sheep’s brain, and I intend to put many puzzling questions about the “fissure of Sylvius” and the “Island of Reil.” These two terms papa could explain better than I could at the present moment, for though I have heard plenty of metaphysical language about them, I do not quite understand their bearing on the great question of mind and matter. I go to these lectures as preparatory to Ethnology, which seems to me a necessary vestibule to the sciences both of History and Philology. Then I had a pet notion that a new psychology might be constructed on a purely anatomical and physiological basis, but Rolleston has upset that by assuring me that the more he studies the less connection he sees between the mind and the nerves.’

‘ Jowett<sup>1</sup> I have not seen lately, except at lectures, and on those pleasant occasions when he gives tea and discusses essays with Tait and me. Tait last time was told that his essay was “not quite good, had too much mannerism, and was gushing in part.” Having made these strictures, Jowett feared lest he had hurt Tait’s tender feelings; so to compensate him, he rose from his chair, lifted the teapot very high, and sent a long amber stream of tea into a cup which he previously rinsed, after himself drinking from it, and exclaimed like Socrates—“Now I will give you some tea, O my good friend.”’

‘ The<sup>2</sup> Bishop’s sermon is creating a great sensation. Few like it. R—— thought it repressive of that liberty of thought which the Protestant belief allows. But R—— on this showing

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte. February 12, 1861.

<sup>2</sup> Diary.

would let every man have a little creed of his own, barring any of the great points, the Trinity and the Incarnation. He does not see how metaphysical doubts of God can arise from critical and historical questioning of the canon. St. — again misunderstood the Bishop. He thought the Bishop wished us to exercise intellect in examining the authority of the Church and of Revelation, and then receive all dogmas implicitly. Here are two objections to this view :

‘1st. If the Bishop said so, all we could test by intellect would be the validity of the canon. Then the question whether we could find the dogmas in Revelation would still remain.

‘2nd. The Bishop did not say this. He especially warned those “who received Revelation as a whole, but began to doubt it in parts.” In a word, he opposed Luther’s point of view. Here the Bishop is no doubt repressive of the spirit of inquiry. But he seemed to me to be so because he felt that even an historical and critical doubt would lead to total religious scepticism. This final state may not last long, but it will eventuate either in “a higher faith,” or in immorality. The alternative he felt, and warned any from exposing themselves to the risk. His moral was “Don’t meddle with edged tools.” Moreover, he seemed to think the sceptical state might continue. It may, but I pray it do not for me. Non-recognition of a God and of any fixed point weakens moral purpose, exposes one to temptation, and may lead to a life of careless sinfulness. This is the chief evil of a sceptical state. It also seems to check the unity of Thought and Will, and certainly to impair the æsthetical enthusiasm.’ This last sentence is of moment, for it shows how Symonds imagined that religious doubts would operate upon the two sides of his nature, the intellect and the emotions. And in this context appears the following entry : ‘I find I must make another rule—not to talk of religious doubts. It is so exciting to my mind that I am always exhausted by it.’

But his rule of avoiding talk upon religious questions only drove the conflict inward upon himself. His health, indeed, did not improve under the strain of speculation. He writes in

his diary for February 21: 'It is sad and strange this life of ours. "We lie on the knees of a mild mystery"—as mild as the Egyptian goddess that holds the naked child. Why should I say this, but that I have had an evil night? The wind howled and raged outside, peeling the scarred face of Balliol, and blowing down one of our few trees. It is strange what a sympathy and spirit this life of the elements produces in one. I must needs be rushing out into the night to see the moon riding through the torn clouds, and to hear the trees grinding one against the other. After one of these nights, I am *βαρυγούνατος* in soul and limb, my brain is hot, and the *medulla oblongata* feverishly weak.' He was right in using this purely scientific expression, for, as we shall see presently, a mischief was being set up in the brain which was to be the source of trial and suffering for many years to come.

Symonds's sense of enjoyment, however, remained very keen. The following notes of an *excursio* to Sonning are full of life and interest:—'March 5, 1861—Met A. Pearson at Didcot and went with him to his uncle's (Hugh Pearson) at Sonning. We drove from Reading, past Earley Court, through Sonning-Walk till we came to the green gates of the vicarage. H. Pearson welcomed us with "Well, my dear Albert," and I felt as if I had known him all my life. He first gave us luncheon, and we talked about Jowett. He is so sorry about the "Essays and Reviews." Says Jowett has never been the same man since he missed his election to the Mastership by one. He feels that in five years this book will be obscure, but Jowett will still be a marked man. Then we went out to see the church—a beautiful specimen of restoration. Woodyear is the architect and Hardman has done the decoration in parts. Two windows by him, and all the brazen chandeliers, were very good. It is a late decorated building. From the carving of some bosses, and especially from a great arch over what may have been an Easter sepulchre, I think a French artist must have been at work. There is so much grace and profusion. The arch is filled with seated figures, like the figures at St. Ouen.

'Then we saw the churchyard, school, river, garden, and Hugh's house. It has a fine old panelled drawing-room. I



was surprised with the immense amount he has done here. He has made the place. Besides restoring the church, he has built two others in the parish. He has made reading-rooms, and set up a rifle corps. Lastly, he has made his own house a paradise. He showed me a Tennyson in which Tennyson had written—

“Æennyson (attonitus)

14 Feb. . . . 50 + 1.

Sonning.”

It was one of the old editions with the “Palace of Art” unaltered. One line in the “Lady of Shalott,” “and her smooth face sharpened slowly,” Tennyson said he had left out because it is so painfully an image of death. He (Tennyson) came to Sonning twice, once with Kingsley. Then he was in religious doubt, and made what H. P. thought a profound remark: “The question of Christianity is a question of the Resurrection.” At dinner came Austin, the curate of Sonning, and Horn, the vicar of Earley. We had pleasant talk about Jenkyns and old Balliol days.’

Term came to an end, and soon after Symonds’s return to Clifton he started, on March 25, for a short tour with his aunt and sister to Amiens and Paris. The diary of this journey is as fresh and lively as ever, and again we feel that whatever internal struggles may have been wearing the young man’s mind he was outwardly full of enjoyment, vivacity, *verve*. It is impossible to give more than a faint indication of the immense variety of interests, of the intellectual activity displayed. Amiens Cathedral is visited from floor to roof; triforium and clerestory galleries traversed at an ‘aerial’ height; nothing is omitted, for certainly what the Symonds family visited, they visited thoroughly; desire to learn and desire to enjoy taking equal part in the direction of their journeys. Then came Paris, and the ‘Stabat Mater’ at the Italian Opera. ‘Mario sang *Cujus animam*, and his part of *Quando corpus*. He realised all I ever heard of his voice—it is soft and pathetic, but seemed to pierce and thrill more than a soprano’s. He gave *Cujus animam* with far greater feeling



than Giuglini. Giuglini has more fluidity, more exquisite mellowness of voice, perhaps, but there is not that mastery about him. The soprani were Mesdames Bertrani and Battu. The latter was young and pretty, and sang with great effect. She had a French hard voice, which seemed to rouse all the enthusiasm of the *vieux garçons*. The chorus and orchestra were very good—the performers (as far as I could see) really French.’ Then comes a rhetorical De Quinceyan record of the first impressions evoked by the Venus of Milo. ‘As I stood and gazed, it terrified me to feel that she had worn that queen-like smile for nineteen centuries—that she had lain in the darkness of the earth, and still had smiled—that her arms had been broken in the crash of empires, and that still she had smiled—that she had seen the slow decay of years grind her fair breast and limbs, and yet had smiled—that now she rests as victoriously as when she gazed on shouting worshippers, and remains alone in majesty, unmoved by the adoration of thousands. Time has not destroyed her. She cannot die. Hers is the immortality of Thought. She lives for ever in the mind of her creator; she lives in the memory of all that once behold her. Were this red fool-fury of the Seine to rise again and shatter Paris, she would smile upon the tramp of armies; and though a *Carmagnole* of slaughter, led by Mænads, raged around her pedestal and crashed her to the ground, still would she smile and disclaim her murderers with eyes calm gazing forward.’

This journey ended on April 6; the party returning by Rouen, Havre, and Southampton. Symonds dreaded the resumption of his home and college life, with its speculations and introspections, which were overlaid, for a time, by what he called the ‘objectivity’ of travel.

And, indeed, the old formulas begin again. ‘I have had a second bad night, and am feeling ill and nervous. Read in the morning about the Criminal Responsibility of Lunatics in the “Psychological Review,” and some notes of papa’s. I am going to write about it for the Essay Society.’ The day following the essay is completed, so active and diligent was he in the execution of any intellectual scheme. But he adds a

reflection which throws light upon his attitude towards the practice of letters in his own particular case. 'Had I known more about the subject, I should have said less and less quickly—perhaps not so well.'

*April 15.*—'Got up with the idea that I was going to Oxford to-day. This did not make me feel too lively—I hate a change.' And his return to Oxford did, in fact, renew all his old difficulties as to conduct. The ill effects are seen at once in such entries, as—'Three bad nights in succession have made me weak and nervous, and with a pain in the trapezoid muscles.' It must be borne in mind, however, that these entries only show what he himself felt; how he struck the outside world is a very different matter. Dr. Symonds had just received and forwarded to his son the following letter from Dean Milman:

'My dear Sir,—I cannot refrain from expressing the pleasure which I received from reading your son's prize poem. I have had much to do in my day with such compositions, having adjudged them for ten years of my life—a decade not, in that respect, of unmingled enjoyment. But "The Escorial" seems to me to rank very highly among its class, and the thought, feeling, and execution to promise better things hereafter.'

And soon after the Diary contains the following note: 'Conington has been hearing good things of me from Bright at Marlborough. His brother, Balliol Bright, has been talking enthusiastically about me to him. As Conington says, he had got a very exaggerated idea of me. The thing is, that I am accustomed to talk to people I do not know, and naturally show my best paces the first few times we meet. But the fount dries up, and in time people must see that one has a stock of conversation ready to order, and power, gained by long habit, of making the most of what little one knows. Poor——knew little enough, yet marshalled it so well that people thought him clever and well-informed.'

At the close of this term Symonds joined his father in

London, and the two set off for what is described as 'an all-delightful tour' to Chamonix and then to Lombardy; and as this was Symonds's first visit to Switzerland and to Italy, with both of which he was so closely connected in after-life, his diary becomes of great interest, and shall be quoted at some length.

MACON, *Sunday, June 16.*—We left at five for Geneva, where I now am. The journey from Amberieu to Belle Garde was extremely fine. It winds through a pass cut by the Rhone, between Jura and some other mountains. After breaking fast we drove out to see Geneva. First we went to the cathedral, a small and symmetrical building of most interesting transition Romanesque. It has curious specimens of the use of round and pointed arch in combination, and borrows more from Roman models in the capitals than any I have seen. There is the pulpit, beneath whose sounding-board Calvin, Knox, and Beza preached. We sat in Calvin's chair. The church is perfectly bare, and Protestant. It was more injured in five weeks of French occupation, when 10,000 men garrisoned Geneva and made it a hospital, than in its three centuries of Protestantism. A little Roman Catholic glass is still left in the windows of the apse.

*Monday, June 17.*—*Hôtel de l'Union, Chamonix.* We started at seven this morning in a carriage and two horses. The journey has been one of uninterrupted beauty. The natural splendour of the country was heightened by the massy clouds which kept ever changing from peak to peak, altering the effect of light and shade, and making the distance clear and brilliant. The wild flowers are innumerable, orchids, rhododendrons, columbines, saxifrage, salvias, vetches, pinks. We broke the journey at Bonneville, where we had breakfast. Up to this point the road was comparatively tame, though behind us rose the Jura, and in front the Alps were shadowy. But at Bonneville is the very port of the Mont Blanc Alps, and of this stands sentinel the great green Mole. From Bonneville to St. Martin, the valley of the Arve is narrow, one series of vast precipices cut by rivulets and pine-clad hills on

either side. At St. Martin we first saw Mont Blanc, swathed in clouds, which slowly rose and left the monarch nearly bare. He did not seem quite so huge as I expected. The amphitheatre of mountains from the bridge over the Arve is splendid; especially that corner where stands the Aiguille de Varens. Here we learned that a bridge on the road to Chamonix had been swept away by a torrent, and that no carriages could pass. However, they telegraphed for carriages to meet us on the other side of the temporary plank bridge, and we set off, through avenues of apple-trees bordering gardens of wild flowers, beneath the park-like swellings of the hills, among whose walnut-bowered hollows slept innumerable châteaux. Soon the ascent began, every turn discovering some great snowpeak or green mountain furrowed with the winter streams. At the bridge we found a one-mule carriage, and continued our journey, Mont Blanc growing on us momentarily. As we came into the Valley of Chamonix the highest peak was very clear, and all along the bold sharp crags swaddled in clouds, and glorified by the far setting sun, were gorgeous in their brilliancy and colours. We arrived at 7.30, and got two high rooms with a good few of the mountains.

*Tuesday, June 18.*—About nine, M. A. Balmat, Professor James Forbes's guide, to whom papa has an introduction, arrived. He is a pleasant, intelligent man, of about fifty, who, when he had read the Professor's letter, greeted us warmly. He no longer acts as professional guide, but volunteered to take us about for the sake of our friendship with Mr. Forbes. Balmat is a curious instance of a man refined by the society of great and philosophic men. Having begun life as a guide, he is now the respected friend and guest of Forbes, Hooker, Murchison, and many others. Indeed, he is intimate with all the savants of Europe. We were surprised at the ease with which he spoke to us, and to the commonest people. The same *bonhomie* pervaded his address to both; but in the one he never fell into familiarity, nor in the other did he lose dignity. Having got alpenstocks, we set off walking to the Glacier des Boissons, which we crossed. I enjoyed picking my way among the crevasses. The glare was just what I

expected, but it produced a curious effect of making the pine hills seem quite black and sombre, adding to their majesty. It is hard to estimate the height of these mountains, and this is the one disappointing thing about them. They do not displace as much sky as the summer thunder-clouds, nor can we fancy that two Ben Nevises might be piled one on the top of the other below snow level (which is at the foot of the Aiguilles). However, the higher you get the more you can estimate the height above. Mont Blanc is himself so far retired that he appears small, while atmospheric differences, the want of an Alpine standard, and the size of the pine trees all tend to confuse English eyes, and lessen both height and distance. Balmat told me just the contrary of himself. In Wales and Scotland he always made mistakes, thinking, with his Alpine standard, the heights and distances much greater. He allowed some time to ascend Arthur's Seat, and found himself immediately at the top of it.

*Wednesday, June 19.*—At eight this morning Balmat called for us with two mules, and took us to the Chapeau rock, which is on the other side of the Mer de Glace. Here we left our mules and began to walk. The road to Montanvert led us along the face of a shelving precipice, on the slope of which were cut steps and footholds. This pass is called the Mauvais Pas, and the precipice beneath is about 300 feet. A rope runs along the path, by which people hold. Papa found it very giddy and dared not look down, but my early experiences at Clifton have seasoned me to climbing, and later on in the day Balmat praised me for my agility. We crossed the Mer de Glace and its western moraine, and climbed up to the inn on Montanvert, where we had lunch. Beneath us is the frozen river gliding majestically among vast pointed hills of rock, on whose summits sleep eternal snows crowned with clouds. They rise on either hand like vast armies guarding the realms of Silence and of Frost. I longed for Charlotte, who would have enjoyed this glorious panorama of ice and precipice, though she would not have taken kindly to the Mauvais Pas and the crevasses.

*Thursday, June 20.*—I passed a bad night. When Balmat



came at five to tell me it was a glorious morning, I felt better after breakfast—and truly it was a glorious morning. The sun was still between the Aiguilles de Dru and Le Moine, nor did his rays as yet interrupt the fresh repose of the atmosphere upon the glaciers. The sky was of a deep grey blue, without a cloud, and against it stood each peak and needle of the vast amphitheatre distinct. Our road lay to Tacul, a rock that juts upon the Mer de Glace, where the glaciers of the Géant and Lechaud join. From this point on the left lies the road to the Jardin, on the right to the pass of the Col de Géant. The whole of the Mer de Glace is a vast lake of ice, shut in by theatres and amphitheatres and vast recesses of untrodden rock—the home of eagles, chamois, and marmots, where men have never trod.

The air was clear and crisp, and the rain of last night was frozen on the surface of the glacier. The view became more sublime as we advanced, and when we were near Tacul, a scene of inconceivable splendour burst upon our view. Standing in the middle of the Mer de Glace we saw Tacul before us, and on either hand the gorges of the Jardin and the Col du Géant, deep in untrampled snow and blazing in the sunlight. The sky above was like melted sapphire, deep and clear and gorgeous, and against it stood the innumerable red pikes of the Moine, the Géant, the Flambeau, Charmoz and Dru. I now felt that I had seen the Alps. All my dreams were realised, nor could there be anything more sublime. A little more walking took us to the stone where Professor James Forbes passed many nights at the foot of Tacul, and near here, at the edge of a great snow-field, we had some lunch—bread and cheese, and curaçoa mixed with glacier streams.

*Friday, June 21.*—We set off this morning at seven for the Flégère. Papa and I rode mules—stupid beasts, that stopped at every bush and rivulet to eat and drink. Balmat was charming through the day. He is a perfect gentleman in manners and feeling, nor is there the least affectation or parvenuism about him. When I compare him with [some] specimens of English travellers, I blush for my countrymen. Here is a guide of Chamonix, the son of a guide (who would



not allow him to go to school or to learn the geology for which he has always had a passion, for fear he might leave Chamonix), whose manners are better, sentiments more delicate, knowledge more extensive, views more enlightened, than most of these *soi-disant* gentlemen and educated men. It is a great pity that his father would not allow him to study when young, for he might have become one of the first geologists of Europe, such fine opportunities for discovery do these mountains afford, and such an advantage his skill and intrepidity have given him. Though a mountaineer, he never brags, and is always considerate for weaker brethren like papa and me. I like very much to see him walking before our mules with his green spectacles, and old brown wideawake upon his grizzled hair, nodding kindly to the old men and women, joking with the guides, and smiling at the little children. He is patriarch of the valley, and nothing can be done without the advice of M. Balmat. After an ascent of two hours we arrived at La Flégère, and saw before us the whole Mont Blanc range. For the first time we appreciated the height of the king himself. Now he towered above all the peaks. The names of most of the aiguilles and glaciers I knew. Balmat told us the rest in order. The Aiguille de Charmoz is still my favourite, guarding the entrance to the Mer de Glace. Here papa read 'Come down, O maid,' from the 'Princess.' It was appropriate, for never were mountains better described than in that idyll.

Arrived, with threatening thunder, and an avalanche from Aiguille de Blaitière, at about two. Rested till table-d'hôte at five. At half-past six Balmat called to take us to his house, a nice chalet beneath Mont Brevent, commanding a fine view of Mont Blanc. Here he gave us coffee, with bread from his own fields and cream and butter from his own cows. He lives alone in the chalet with his sister—a fine, tall woman, with a noble face worthy of the brave Balmat stock. She is far superior to any woman I have yet seen near Chamonix, and though gaunt and hard with toil, has yet a simplicity and ease of manners that mark true good breeding, that is, good feeling. The room we sat in had two beds, and on the walls were portraits (Prof. Forbes's conspicuous), as well as three ugly R.C.

coloured prints, kept for his sister's sake. He showed us his books, chiefly presents from great savants, and the various souvenirs he has received. The way in which he performed the part of host, without fuss, and without talking about the humility of his dwelling, put us at our ease. His cat and dog assisted at the feast. Then we walked back through his fields, and papa gave him a letter, written partly by him, partly by me, containing a ten-pound note, which he was to read after leaving us to-night. He mentioned the case of a cousin of his who had received some injury on the chest among the mountains, and papa asked him to bring him to see him, which he did while there was yet daylight. The young man (of about twenty-five) has Balmat blood, and shared the same respectful ease, good feeling, and delicacy which we had noticed in Auguste. I acted as interpreter to the medical questions and answers, but it was bungling work.

*Monday, June 24.*—At seven we left Brieg and began the ascent of the Simplon. The clouds were slowly drawing their length like dragons up the hills, writhing through the gorges that dripped with last night's rain. All the landscape was clear and watery, and the valley of the Rhone, as we ascended, looked exquisitely blue. Between Berisal and Simplon the finest view is that of the Bernese Alps. They lay behind us, and their snow-capped horns were seen through a vista of pine valleys. The sun had nearly sucked up all the clouds upon them, and the few that remained glided like pearls along the silver snow, and shed soft shadows on the grass beneath. It is a superb chain of mountains, and continues visible for some miles of winding ascent, till we reached the glaciers and the galleries that keep off avalanches. At the extreme height of 7,000 feet I found most lovely flowers—the larger and smaller blue gentian, several pink primroses, a very large white saxifrage, the *Ranunculus globosus*, and a sulphur-coloured anemone, of great size and beauty, which gemmed the meadows; also the little grey snow-flower. Soon the descent began, and at about one we came to Simplon—an ugly village, in a dreary waste of hills, where we had luncheon. The descent from Simplon was grand in the extreme. It is one

long divine pass of granite walls, impending, towering, sloping, polished, rifted, bare, tufted with pines, dry, seamed with cataracts, now wide, now narrow, now sunny, now black and gloomy—every change, in short, of the wildest and most majestic cliff scenery presented in a long panorama of many miles. At about six we came into the Italian valley, and our snow-accustomed eyes were refreshed with vines and chestnuts in full flower, and walnut trees—our torrent-deafened ears with the soft Italian and strange *patois* of the people.

DOMO D'OSSOLA, *Tuesday, June 25*.—After breakfast we set out at seven for Baveno, on the Lago Maggiore. It was a beautiful morning, and the valley looked most richly coloured. Some great hills of purple stone set thick with trees quite came up to my ideas of Italian mountains. The road was lined with mulberry and walnut trees, and the usual magnificent Salvator Rosa Spanish chestnuts. The lake burst suddenly upon us, sleeping in its green expanse with all the summer on its shadowy hills. There is something peculiar in this Italian outline—a softness of sweep and a woolliness occasioned by the multitudinous trees that one recognises at once. We got very good rooms at the Belle Vue, looking on the lake, and soon after we set off to see Isola Bella, where the Borromeos have a palace. We got into one of the picturesque boats, covered with an awning of striped cotton, and were soon rowed across by two men. The opaque green of the water, which looked as if it could have been cut like chrysoprase, struck me greatly. The gardens which we saw first are full of rare plants and curious Louis Quatorze fountain work. What pleased me most was one terrace, looking on the lake, with great cypresses standing like sentinels beside the balustrades. Here I could fancy ladies or moonlight lovers. The house is a specimen of Italian villas—full of marbles and poor copies of pictures; tall, cold, gilded and comfortless. It has hardly any furniture in it, but what there is is old, stately, and stiff-backed. On the walls are continually painted the armorials of the Borromeos, with their mocking motto, 'Humilitas,' blazoned for ever beneath coronets—not but what it suited the aspect of the sitting-rooms. The family occupy this palace four months

in the year, and are always liberal in allowing strangers to visit it.

We returned and dined at two. Then we set out again, at half-past three, for the Lago d'Orta, in a carriage. From Orta we crossed to the Isola di San Giulio. By far the finest fresco in the church was a niche by one of Gaudenzio Ferrari's scholars, painted with St. George and St. Apollonia. Both were fully beautiful, and the exquisite youth of St. George, with his long yellow hair flowing over the breast-plate, was worthy to be copied by the Arundel Society. On our way home we saw innumerable fireflies. The sunset had been sombre, and it felt cold; but behind us was a clear green evening light with Hesper, and as we came near the lake it lightened over the eastern hills. The lightning increased and played upon the lake, revealing at intervals the line of mountains and a campanile in their dip. A great roof of clouds rose into the middle of the sky, and occasionally we heard very distant thunder, while the lake swelled with a sea noise. It was a fine scene, and became still finer when the moon slowly rose in a rift of sky between the hills and clouds, sullenly red, making a long tawny path upon the waves. I can hardly think it is the same lake which I saw this morning, basking in such blue summer mist and such ambrosial odours.

BAVENO, *Wednesday, June 26*.—I had another bad night, which has left me very weak and depressed. The electrical state of the atmosphere must have something to do with it, for it thundered when I woke, and now at twelve o'clock a great storm is coming over us. We cannot leave for Lugano till 2.30. Meanwhile we rest.

To-morrow they open the cathedral. 'O for the wings of a dove.'

LUGANO, *Thursday, June 27*.—It was still wet, so we decided to go to Milan, and to start for Como, on our way there, at ten. After breakfast we went out again to see Luini's frescoes in the Church of the Angeli.

The cathedral at Como surprised me. It is a good-sized marble building of mixed Gothic and Palladian. Its façade contains some delicate sculpture, and the interior is liberal and

broad. In its windows is fine Milan glass, a kind of imitation of the Munich, of very brilliant colours and designs. I wonder how it is that our English artists have none of them this trick of glass.

*Saturday, June 29.*—I have not much to record to-day when I open this new book, which Sommerfeldt<sup>1</sup> got for me last night. We left at 9.30 this morning for Como, where we spent the day. It was a beautiful morning, and this lured us, otherwise it would have been hardly worth spending a whole day there. As it has turned out I do not think it has repaid us. I, however, take more pleasure in the works of art than of nature, and in seeing men moving than goats and cows. In the train was an Englishman, who delighted me because he so thoroughly came up to my theories about physical science people. The instant I set eyes on him, I felt that such a pair of spectacles, cunning cold grey eyes, sharp pale face, fresh light hair and thin lips, with a generally intelligent but self-satisfied look and style of dress, in which greys and drabs prevailed, could not but belong to some one who had studied physical science exclusively; and his enthusiastic geological remarks to papa, as well as the cold way in which he received allusions to Camelot and Tristram Shandy, confirmed my ideas of him.

At Como we took a boat, and were rowed on the water. Both papa and I were struck with the strong resemblance this lake presents to the Rhine. For beauty, as far as we could see, there is nothing to choose between them, but that Como's water is more intensely green, and that its banks are dotted with white villas and red roofs instead of grey castles. But I ought not to speak disparagingly of Como, for I enjoyed its cool listless air and sleepy sunlight very much, as I lay in the boat, and heard papa read 'The Lady of Shalott,' and 'Mariana in the South.' I read 'Cenone,' and then we returned to luncheon, after which we drove to Camerlata, and so to Milan. We had intended to shop after dinner, but it is the Feast of St. Peter, and all but the eating shops are closed. So we strolled into the cathedral and then came back. We are

<sup>1</sup> The courier.



disappointed at seeing so few pretty people. The women are old-looking, sallow, and coarse-featured. Yet with all this they are graceful when they wear the pretty black lace mantilla and fan. The men are better looking, and of three types. The first is a race of fair-complexioned gigantic soldiers, chasseur and cavalry, a magnificently moulded set of men. The second is a fair, pleasing, olive-coloured, large-eyed kind of youth, 'dis-solutely pale and femininely fair.' The third is a regularly Parisian, black-moustachioed, gross or withered abomination.

*Sunday, June 30.*—Breakfast at nine. Off at ten to San Maurizio. This church is also called Monastero Maggiore, from its having been an extremely rich foundation. On the left hand wall of the chapel is a scene from the martyrdom of St. Catherine. In the foreground she kneels bared for her execution. Her hair falls about her, and her eyes are raised to heaven with their usual expression of piteous yet uncom-plaining loneliness. Behind are the shattered wheels and slain soldiers, blasted by an angel, who leans with drawn sword from a fiery cloud. On the right hand wall is the last scene of her martyrdom. She is kneeling with her profile to the spectator, and her hands meekly joined. A rich robe of brocade clothes her as befits a princess, and her face is more than queen-like in its sanctity of repose. So extremely beautiful is this figure that one does not at once become conscious of the brawny ruffian who swings his body round, with clenched lips, to bring the drawn sword with all its weight upon her neck. In the distance are some soldiers looking on, and far away to the left we see two angels in a mist of glory laying her sleeping body in the tomb.

*Monday, July 1.*—Beautiful morning. Set off by the 8.30 train for Arona. We passed Magenta on our way, and were much entertained by the conversation of a *spirituelle* Italian lady. At Novara we went up into the town, and from a high terraced hill saw the immense amphitheatre of mountains bounding the plain. They made a semicircle, rising on either hand from shadowy blue hills, and gradually ascending with peaks of dazzling white to the great mass of Monte Rosa, standing highest of them all in the middle of the horizon.



Such a view for gorgeous colouring and overpowering beauty I have never seen—not even at Salzburg. From our terrace these mountains seemed impassable. They rose like an army that had formed itself into a crescent to defend Switzerland from Italian invaders, and from every solid base of blue glittered a spear of ice and snow. At Arona we took the steamboat. The day was glorious, and we fully enjoyed this lake.

After dinner at Bellinzona came some musicians—two men, a woman, and a boy—violin, violoncello, and guitar—and played ‘Ah! che la morte’ with great spirit. I was touched, for just so did Consuelo and Joseph Haydn play their way through Germany. Papa gave them a franc, and I gave the little boy some cherries and a cake. Papa has gone to see one of the English ladies who is ill.

HOSPENTHAL, *Tuesday, July 2*.—Up to breakfast at seven. Started from Bellinzona at eight in a carriage, which is to take us to Fluelen for 150 fr. A little before one o’clock we stopped to luncheon at Faïdo. At Airolo it was a question whether we should pass the night; but as we arrived there about 3.30, we decided to go on to Hospenthal, a short way beyond the highest portion of the pass. So we had three horses put into the carriage, and began an ascent which, for ingenious and multiplied windings, exceeded anything upon the Simplon. Looking back, the valley, which had seemed so monotonous, presented a wide and savage view, and to right and left came out the snow peaks. But soon we left this valley and struck into another still more barren and desolate. Such a furious wind swept from the glaciers that we put on our greatcoats, and were glad to shiver beneath two railway rugs. I shall never forget this July 2 for its alternations of heat and cold, and for the curious experience of a sick headache under the intensity of both. One advantage of being unwell in fine scenery is, that it frets the views into your memory. We were now driving through snow-wreaths, which, melted by day, were beginning to freeze again at night. There was no vestige of herbage, and the cold cruel cliffs rose impassable before and all around us. Up them crept the road, winding in and out upon

itself, and giving the appearance, with its strong walls, of a succession of forts which we must storm and take. Our three horses bore us bravely. Weary and piercingly cold was this climb. Bastion frowned over bastion, and Alp on Alp arose. The sun was lost to us, though his light still sat upon the hills; and the strong north wind was always blowing a ragged cloud from the eyebrow of the mountains, which, as it spread into the valley, dissolved and flew about in fleecy foam. At the top of the pass we entered into this cloud, and proceeded through a hideous region of granite, sloppy snow, ice, and inky pools. Not a vestige of anything more cheerful was there to soothe the eyes. The cloud was all around us, and through its rents we saw towering above us still more scornful crags. Here I got my ideas of mountains satisfied. Re-descent began, and we left the cloud, journeying now beneath his skirts through a valley rough with granite boulders.

We reached the Hôtel de Meyerhof at Hospenthal about 7.30. The houses in the village are more picturesque than any I have seen in Switzerland. They are old and very large, and built on the Swiss cottage plan. But there is more variety and decoration about them. The wood is more carefully carved, and is arranged in curious patterns.

*Wednesday, July 3.*—I passed a very bad night, in the course of which I had this dream. I thought that papa and I were travelling, and were sleeping in adjoining rooms. We were in some hot country, and I had just come to the end of a night spent in great pain. Toward the morning I slept fairly, and when I woke the sun was shining hot upon my darkened room. For some reason or other papa had left his room, and I was alone. As I rose a horrid sense of impending evil oppressed me. I could hardly stand, and in great weakness I tottered to a chair that stood before a tall looking-glass. There I saw myself a hideous sight. My skin was leprous white, like parchment, and all shrivelled. From every pore burst a river of perspiration, and ran to my feet. My feet were cramped and blanched, and cockled up with pain. But the face was the most awful sight. It was all white—the lips white and parted—the eyes pale, and presenting a perfectly flat surface. They

were dilated, and shone with a cold blue eerie light. I heard a noise in papa's room, and knocked. He said 'Come in' in his usual tone, and I crept up to him. He was shaving and did not see me, till I roused him by touching him and saying slowly, 'Papa.' Then he turned round and looked intently at me and inquiringly. I shrieked, 'Papa, don't you know me?' but even while I cried the vision of my own distorted features came across me, and filled me with my utter loneliness. At last he cried, 'My son,' and, burying his face in his hands, he added, 'All in one night.' In an ecstasy of deliverance I clasped his neck, and felt that now I need not go back into that twilight room with its bed and the mystery behind its curtains. But he went on in a hesitating voice, 'My poor boy! what fiend—or demon?' I stopped the question with a yell. Something seemed to tear me, and I awoke struggling. Such was my dream—more horrible than it seems, for the terror of dreams bears no relation to the hideousness of their incidents, but to some hidden emotion.

We left at eight, and finished the St. Gothard in driving mist and rain. I am not certain whether I did not like it best so, for the grandeur half revealed left much to the imagination. Passing through Altdorf we came to Fluelen, on the lake Lucerne, and at 1.15 went on board the steamer. The clouds were lifting, and we enjoyed a succession of beautiful views. This lake is incomparably finer than any I have seen. Maggiore is in quite a different style, and therefore shuns comparison; still I could not but feel how much more positive beauty, not to speak of grandeur, there is in the varied mountain forms, craggy precipices, snowy heights, and smooth green lawns of Lucerne.

[The Alps and Italy, reminiscences of his journey, were still in Symonds's mind, when, soon after reaching home, he makes the following entry:]

*Friday,*<sup>1</sup> *August 2.*—Conington and I walked through Redland to the Sea Walls and home by the observatory.

<sup>1</sup> Diary.

There we watched a great thunder-cloud, which for majesty of shape, size, and colour surpassed the Alps. Its change and progress was like a symphony. Far away, from west to north it stretched; above the channel the summits were of the pearliest white; domes and peaks, on which the sunlight rested; its middle was of light ethereal blue, like the base of Monte Rosa, but its feet were indigo, and a tawny fringe of angry red was driven, mixed with mist and tempest, all along the van. First it towered in simple beauty, transfigured with the sunlight that sat above it, pouring bands of glory down its chasms, and shooting in broad columns on the trees and rocks and downs—ever changing with the changing wind and scudding fleecy sands, fleeces that ran before the armaments of thunder. Soon this aspect altered; more and more of the blue sky was hidden as the masses rose—the cerulean blue was changed to deepest purple, and the indigo to sullen black. The wind swept furiously, the cloud came onward in a crescent, the sun was darkened, and scarcely flamed upon the topmost edges, and in a breath the gust of wind and rain were dashed upon us. For a moment all was dark and the landscape blurred, the vivid greens and delicately pencilled outlines of the hills were gone, the wind howled restlessly. But this again changed. The cloud had broken with its own fury. Like a squadron that rides upon the foeman's guns and sweeps them off, and then returns scattered and decimated to its camp, so this ponderous mass of thunder-cloud was tattered, rent, and dissipated by the fury of its onset—its domes were ragged, and beneath its feet shone streaks of lurid sky, on which the jagged tops of the firs and beeches trembled. Now came the last movement of the symphony—all the landscape was grey, but clear, and full of watery sunlight. An exhaustion like that of a child fallen asleep from crying seemed to hold the winds and woods and distant plain. All was calm, but the broken clouds went sailing on overhead, dizzy with their own confusion, and, as it were, a ground swell of its passion still rocked the upper air. We turned and went homeward. In this symphony, or sonata, call it which you like, there were three distinct movements—an Adagio, an

Allegro, a Presto, and a Minuet. It should have been written in D flat, and no passage should have been free from agitation. But the first part should have most beauty. It should contain the germinal idea of the whole in a tremulous thought constantly recurring, and superinduced upon an air of calm majestic sublimity, which should be the basis of the movement. This agitation should gradually usurp the place of the calm air in the second movement. In the third it should reign supreme—all mere beauty should be lost in the tempestuous passion. In the last the calm air of the first movement should return, but shorn of any superfluous ornament, sad and melancholy, and often troubled by faint echoes of the central spasm.

[From Clifton, Symonds went on a reading party to North Wales. There had been a question as to whether he should join a party at Ilkley, in Yorkshire, or should go to Bangor. The advantages of having Mr. Rawlinson for a coach and Mr. Stephens for a companion settled the question in favour of North Wales, and the following are the notes of his stay there. He was far from well. The relaxing air of Bangor did not suit him, and he was oppressed by the prospect of the ‘Schools.’]

*Wednesday,<sup>1</sup> August 7.*—Rose at 6.30, and breakfast at seven. Ch. was down to see me off, so I said good-bye to her—dear, good, darling sister—and went off. How unselfish and thoughtful she is.

A long dreary day by Birmingham and Chester to Bangor. Drove to 11 Menai View Terrace. Mrs. Thomas can give us three rooms—one sitting-room on ground floor, a good double-bedded room above, and a tolerable bedroom.

*Thursday, August 8.*—Passed the morning in shopping and seeing Rawlinson. He has given us papers to do for him.

*Friday, August 9.*—Went at nine after a second bad night to coach with R. He gave me a good lecture on the Indo-European nations, and the people of early Italy. We dined at

<sup>1</sup> Diary.



three, and then went out a little into the town with Law. It was very wet, so we did no more than look for horses which we could not find. Bangor seems to be a damp relaxing place. I am in despair about Roman history. Livy seems, daily, more confused, and Arnold does not help him. My memory too is very weak.

*Sunday, August 11.*—Stephens and I walked round by Garth to cathedral. Came there at 11, found it began 11.30. Got a little well of a seat, and watched people come in—all like parrots, mean, unhealthy, hideous. Service atrocious—‘*Venite*,’ a sort of catch, in which all the voices tumbled in at the end one after another. No time or tune, or rhythm, or attempt at enunciation. A few monosyllables spit out viciously—all long words slurred over. Yet this choir sang ‘The king shall rejoice,’ and ‘When the ear heard her.’ A good old blind Dean, with an earthquake-shaken face, enjoyed it all. Wet as usual—muggy, and depressing. Law and we dined at George table-d’hôte, such a skurry and bad waiting—English.

Stupid walk to Bridge. Read some ‘Faust.’

*Tuesday, August 13.*—A beautiful day. Stephens and I set out after dinner in a car, and were driven to the slate quarries at Penrhyn. Hence we set out walking up the pass to Capel Curig. This is a fine amphitheatre of hills; the forms are bolder and more pyramidal than in Cumberland, the golden gorse, purple heather, and blue air tints, made a colouring that Maggiore did not surpass. Borradale, at the top of the Styne head and Langdale Pikes, perhaps are better, but I did not see them in such a flood of beautiful light. An exhilarating day.

*Wednesday, August 21.*—Slept very ill—a night of overtaxed brain, and constant weary dreams. I must begin some strychnine, I feel so low.

Stephens and I went to Carnarvon. We saw the Castle well—old, perfect, interesting. It had been our intention to drive to Llanberis, and walk back, but a return car we wanted to take kept us waiting, and finally did not come. We walked about two miles out, to a pretty stream, where I felt very depressed



and ill. I cannot read to-day. Stephens is like a cart-horse, and I am very melancholy.

*Friday, August 30.*—I felt uncertain this morning whether I should go with Stephens and Palmer, as the walk embraces two first-class and several inferior mountains. The weather, too, seemed uncertain. However, Palmer at eleven persuaded me to go, and we set off in a car for Bethesda. The morning was fresh and windy. From Bethesda we crossed the Ogwen, and went straight up the first great hill on the right of the valley. It is called Carnedd Filiast, and a stiff pull it was that brought us to the top. The view over the plain of Carnarvon, Bangor, Conway, and Anglesea was broad and sunny. From this point we walked along the backbone of a great wedge of mountain that separates the Ogwen and Llanberis valleys. On the one side descended walls of breathless precipices to the Capel Curig road, on the other lay the Llanberis lakes and the three great peaks of Snowdon, ever changing as we moved. The lights were perfect, clear and blue, with mazy moving clouds. Palmer had described the walk as being one ‘along the ridge,’ by which it seemed he meant going up and down over the various peaks of a considerable range. I got very tired at the last and largest, Glyder Vawr, whose sides are steep and full of rolling stones. The wind, however, aided and freshened us. It carried Stephens’s hat over an abyss, but that did not incommode him. The tops of the Glyders Vawr and Vach are quite barren, and strewed with gigantic piles of rock fallen from aiguilles that still remain. Their titanic slabs reminded me of Druid circles as much as the cliffs of the Saxon Switzerland did of Egyptian temples. Snowdon was very grand from here, as was Hebog, and the distant sea and Cader Idris—a fine sweep of hills. Thence, having gazed down beetling cliffs and clambered dizzy pinnacles, we tramped down through bog and moss on Capel Curig, which we reached about six. I was famished, not having eaten since eight, and drunk only a little sherry on Glyder Vawr. Besides, the walk was the longest I ever took. We got slippers and I bought a pair of stockings, and became comfortable for a good dinner. Then we drove home in the yellowing gloom. Llynogwen, and some lonely

fishermen fishing in the cold clear starlight, struck me much. Home about ten.

[The Bangor party came to an end on September 1, and Symonds returned to Clifton with his friend Mr. Stephens, to whom all his favourite places and things—the cathedral, Sea-Walls, Cook's Folly, Nightingale Valley, the old oak in Leigh Woods—were shown, one by one, and the effect recorded with obvious contentment in such phrases as, 'Stephens everywhere pleased.' From Clifton Symonds went on a visit to Wiltshire, where 'we went out cub-hunting. Charlotte had a little white pony. I was mounted on a splendid black called "Euxine." I rejoiced to feel the strong spirited animal beneath me.'

Symonds's intellectual life continued active as ever, and its growth fostered the habit of self-analysis.]

*September 29.*<sup>1</sup>—Goethe's 'Life'<sup>2</sup> is a well-sustained biography. The genius of the man has an electrical effect upon me, galvanising these dull nerves into something like life and enthusiasm. Lewes's aim is to give a succession of vivid pictures, and this he achieves. So good is the portrait painting that every line thrills me. The reading is a continual process of self-comparison, how impotent and humiliating to myself. This discontent with my own personality is weak. If I had a really great character I could stand alone, and be content to remain what I am without sighing for genius. If I had faith I should see myself as part of the divine scheme, and anticipate a time in the hereafter when mere human ability would be all useless and men stand on the same level. That, now, I cannot hold; and the belief that what we are we shall be, that the vital force within us may be carried into fresh forms, but will never be increased or diminished—prevents me from seriously entertaining thoughts of suicide. To rush from a state of discontent I know, to one I do not know, and to be the worse peradventure for the change, that is unreasonable. Reading this life teaches me how much of a poet's soul a man may have without being a poet, what high yearnings may plague him

<sup>1</sup> Diary.

<sup>2</sup> By Lewes.

without his ever satisfying them, what a vast appreciation and desire may exist where there is no expression or formative will. And in all these cases the force is wanting, power is absent, spontaneity is torpid. Susceptibility to beauty, capabilities of acute pain and pleasure, strong æsthetical emotions, these do not constitute a poet, though a poet must have them. Again, deficient ability for mathematics, for history, for politics, an impressionability that opens the mind to every subject without allowing it to master them, melancholy dejection and thoughts of suicide, the effervescence of sentimentalism, the vacillation of religious doubt, these do not spoil a poet, though they make a lesser man contemptible. Power, all-pervading power, pushing the soul into activity beyond receptive susceptibility, covering all deficiency by concentrating itself on the passion of the moment—this makes the difference between the man of genius and the dilettante driveller. Not so with men of talent; they differ from men of genius in kind; and talent, however small, is always definitely appreciable. A man may have the susceptibilities of genius without any of its creative power; but if he has any atom of talent he cannot be without practical energy. I may rave, but I shall never rend the heavens: I may sit and sing, but I shall never make earth listen. And I am not strong enough to be good—what is left? I do not feel strong enough to be bad. Then again of Love. Oh! woe is me! for it seems that if I had but Love I might get strength.

‘Ihr Anblick giebt den Engeln Stärke.’

I wish I could concentrate all my vitality into three years, and at the end perish, having lived a life of worth and energy through that short time.

*Saturday, October 5.*—I am twenty-one to-day, the end and goal I have so often thought of. Up to this point I have been struggling, saying, ‘When I am a man I shall do this, understand this, be great; now I am a boy, and from a boy little is expected.’ The sum of intellectual progress I hoped for has been obtained, but how much below my hopes. My character has developed, but in what puny proportions, below

my meanest anticipations. I do not feel a man. This book is an evidence of the yearnings without power, and the brooding self-analysis without creation that afflict me. I am not a man. Papa gave me all De Quincey's works; Auntie 5*l.*; Ch., Goethe's Autobiography and Faust, 3 vols.; E. and M., a ring; Ch. and E., a thermometer; Aunt M., a bookstand; Aunt Ch. a pair of candlesticks. Besides these, Edmond sent me some flowers, and Mrs. Buchanan a pretty pencil-case and key for my watch-chain. Ch., James, Lucy, and I walked down to morning cathedral and heard the 'Benedictus' from the 'Requiem.'

Just before dinner Jowett arrived. I was sitting in my study and heard him ask Newsome, 'Where is the drawing-room?' So like him to forget. And when N. said, 'Downstairs,' he answered, 'Oh, yes, to be sure.' Mr. Hill, Alfred, and Florence, and Mr. Leech dined. Jowett, of course, did not talk at dinner. Papa had to leave us about 8.30 on his way to Tortworth to see Lady Ducie. He will sleep, and return by train to-morrow.

After the guests were gone I talked a little to Jowett. He deplored the class-lists, but thought that there is no practically better way of electing examiners.

*Sunday, October 6.*—We breakfast at nine. I was glad of this, for it is hard to entertain Jowett. His forte is an *aurea taciturnitas*, and he has a habit of shutting up a subject by a single sentence. The conversation is one conducted by question and answer. I start a subject and ask a question. He makes an answer and stifles the subject. Auntie and Ch. do not aid.

At 10.30 we walked through the garden to the cathedral.

I was amused with the sensation Jowett made. His beauty would not fail to attract attention; but besides this, people recognised him from Richmond's portrait. We sat under the organ. He admired the restoration and the choir. We just looked at the Chapter House on the way home. Jowett and I walked up and down the garden. I told him of my birthday. He said the most important era in a man's life is when he leaves college. Then to Mr. Rhind. Jowett was shy and

silent. He told us a little of his visit to Berlin, many years ago, when he saw Schelling, Neander, and others. Jowett is peculiarly sensitive about not being coddled. He will not be sent out in a carriage if he can help it, and toiling up Constitution Hill from the cathedral, he said, 'Our young legs don't mind this, do they?' puffing all the time. He told me Tennyson had written little lately; has been four months in the Pyrenees; his boys very beautiful; not precocious. Tennyson never writes letters. Jowett has only had two short notes from him. He reads a great deal. He looks on 'Maud' as on a young and misunderstood child—would be pleased with papa's verdict, that it is his most subtle poem. Jowett had mentioned some one as 'over-educated.' I asked what he meant. He said that the intellect might be developed beyond the character and will. It happens in the case of Germans mostly.

*October 7.*—Jowett and I went to Seed's, where he had his portrait taken. It was very good of him to let it be done, for he hated it. He stood so funnily—like a doll, straight and stiff. The man tried to drill him into a position; he was meek, but awkward. I told him to stand naturally. The man wanted him to set his necktie straight—trying to destroy all personality; but I would not let him. It took a long time, and Jowett looked cross and uncomfortable. When we came in, Jowett read out to Ch. and me the song of the Jews and Karshish the Arab, from Browning. He reads quietly and undramatically, but well. This nearly made us late for dinner. He is very absent. In going to his room he tried the backstair door first, and then wanted to come up to my landing. One reason why he makes me shy, beyond his own silent shyness, is that he is so uncommunicative of himself. I feel that he is self-wrapped, and that he will not lift the curtain. He lives within a veil, and is all in all to his own thoughts. Egotistical people are easier to get on with, partly because you despise their egotism. He has written the notes to the whole of the 'Republic,' and is now re-writing them. He is trying to raise as many modern points of interest as he can, and the allusion to the dependence of intellectual and moral qualities



on each other is one. A long discussion about the merits of Bacon and Galileo, and about Pascal, occupied the greater part of the evening; Jowett refused to carry speculation beyond the grave—the realm, he said, of faith.

*October 9.*—Jowett sat up late again with papa. He talked about himself. He feels that he must go on in his work of liberating the minds of men. He complains of headache, powerlessness of brain, want of sustained thought, imperfect memory, as I do. Jowett sees a danger of young men being sentimentalised or criticised from production. His point of view in all these things is evidently what young men can be made into. At six we drove off; Jowett looking very funny in a barrel-bodied greatcoat. I put him into a carriage full of people returning from an archery meeting. Jowett waved his hand and smiled rather slightly, and then he was gone. I returned to myself.

‘Jowett<sup>1</sup> went off yesterday, looking very cherubic in a barrel-bodied greatcoat, and a hat put back from his immense forehead. The last sight I had of him was sitting in the railway carriage, irradiated by the soft splendour of its lamp, and hugging a chaotic mass of coats and umbrellas, from the midst of which he waved a finny hand in token of good-bye. I turned like Sir Bedivere, “revolving many memories,” and heard the first act of the “Colleen Bawn.” But my inner life was too perturbed, and the acting was too bad to admit of any longer patience, so I left the theatre just as the plot thickened, fully convinced that had I acted any one of the parts, not excepting the Colleen’s, I could have done better. Then I came home and had it demonstrated to me by papa that my income<sup>2</sup> was enough for any man to live on. I dare say it is, and I could live on much less. After which I had a very bad night, and woke this morning “a wiser and a worser

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte. Clifton, October 10, 1861.

<sup>2</sup> His income at this time amounted in all to three hundred and fifty pounds a year. It was composed partly of allowances from his father and his aunt, Miss Sykes, partly of income from some property of his own.



man"—often the result of vivid phantasmagoria and strong emotions suffered during sleep. If for two or three successive nights I saw such a murder enacted as I saw last night, or felt such a central passion, I must become a bad man. It would be the beast within me gradually gathering strength for madness. There now is my life inner and outer for you since I saw you. I have asked James to ride with me this afternoon to Sutton Court. This is a capital Jowettian pen.'

*October 10.*<sup>1</sup> — One of the most provoking things about ourselves is that we form pernicious habits, and do not know they are so till they have become necessary. The cathedral soothed me at first like a delicious opiate; now it tyrannises over me and irritates me like opium after long indulgence. The common defect of all æsthetics is that they raise a yearning which cannot be satisfied by themselves except in creation. For a while the yearning is melancholically seductive. But after a time the yearning remains when the pleasure of contemplation has grown insipid, and we seek a 'human element.'

[In October Symonds returned to Oxford. His Diaries, as fully kept as ever, record the same round of breakfasts, luncheons, dinners, intellectual talks, walks, rides, hard work for Jowett—'he asked about my work: said an essay a day was too much; I must be careful not to break my camel's back'—quantities of poetry, ballads and poems in the 'In Memoriam' stanza; daily visits to Magdalen or New College Chapel; an interview with an electro-biologist, and another with a phrenologist.

Much of the poetry remains unpublished, in the Diary; these verses, for example, written on October 22, 1861:

O love, sweet love, I sit and sing to thee,  
And from sere reeds sought in the winter brake—  
Hoarse reeds through which the winds wail mournfully,  
And the waves wash—a funeral pipe I make;  
For thou art dead, sweet love, and never more  
Melodious movements of the breathing spring

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<sup>1</sup> Diary.

Shall thaw thy blood, or spread thy pinions frore,  
Or stir thy cold stiff throat to carolling.  
These reeds shall bloom and rustle to the breath  
Of minstrel winds in summer ; birds shall sweep,  
And painted flies shall flicker ; but thy death  
Is unrelenting as the marble sleep  
Which holds Endymion, whose eternal swoon  
Breaks to no kisses of the passionate moon.

There are jottings, too, of conversations with his numerous friends, as, for instance, these on Diaries : ‘Diary good for thoughts, not for things. Ordinary log-book a poor affair. Useless to eliminate what others ought not to see. Danger of overdoing emotion. Mrs. Clive might have made a most powerful novel out of Haydon’s Diaries.’ As a groundwork to all this life and activity, as a never-failing note of pain, run the records of ill health : ‘Still weak and unwell, I cannot read, a cloud is over my brain’ ; ‘return of old cramped head feeling’ ; ‘a long internal agony of doubts, analysis, questionings.’ ‘Curious talk about my want of sympathy, ambition, mad suicidal fancies. God preserve me.’]

‘I<sup>1</sup> have not much to tell you. Last night I saw Jowett, and asked him how he liked his portrait. He said “it was well enough, he supposed,” and that was all I could extort from his modesty. He is ascetically unconscious of his appearance, and does not possess more than a slip of looking-glass too narrow for his chin, much to Green’s annoyance in shaving when he occupied the rooms. Some people supposed that this is affected to subdue youthful pride, for there is an old story of his being detected, the night he got the Balliol, expatiating in a scholar’s gown and arranging his soft brown curls before a mirror in the Master’s lodge.

‘This morning I wrote to Mrs. B—— in answer to a note from her, and said I should come on Saturday. Whether I shall be able I still doubt, for, after a ride this afternoon, the swelling on my face has so increased that I look ridiculous.

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte. Oxford, October 31, 1861.

If it does not abate sensibly to-morrow I cannot show my head among strangers.'

'I<sup>1</sup> went to have my head examined by the phrenologist the other day, and, though he gave me enough encouragement, I think he is a great quack.

'Some shrewd things he said. On first feeling my head he pronounced that I came of a long-lived race, and booked me for ninety. The first part of this judgment is true. Then he proceeded to explain that my vitality was intense and worked vehemently. He told me my historical memory was defective, and that though I had tune I had no time. Both these observations are true; my memory for facts is lamentable, and I cannot dance properly, though I am sensitive to music. Here, I think, he stopped. The next was vague. And I have noticed that phrenologists always guess pretty accurately about memory, time, and tune. All the moral faculties were well developed except faith. The æsthetical parts of the intellect, form, size, colour, order, number, were large; so was language, causality, and comparison. My want of caution and acquisitiveness seemed the most dangerous part of my character, though a good secretiveness and firmness made up for them in some measure. I asked the man many questions after he had examined me, about Shelley's small head, &c., and here his impotent quackery came out. He defined genius as scrofula. After that I knew how much the man was worth.'

[To any one who reads this extraordinary record of a young man's life, the courage, the persistence, the force of will which enabled Symonds to achieve what he did, must be a matter for marvel and for admiration. He was right when he wrote much later in life, in Dec. 1889, 'People will eventually say, this man did much work, good work, under extraordinary difficulties.'

In this term the shadow of the 'final schools' begins to make itself distinctly felt. The references to class lists, examiners and their qualities, become frequent. Symonds, a confirmed Platonist, is afraid of one of them whom he calls a

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte. Oxford, November 17, 1861.

‘little Aristotelian pedlar’; and remarks, ‘The teaching of Jowett educates young men, but unfits them for the schools. Plato is learned by them, and they are examined in Aristotle. All we want is fair play for both. Conington thinks Jowett as perverse in his own way, and unfair to Aristotle.’ His walks with his two intimate friends, Mr. Stephens and Mr. Courthope, are largely occupied with the subject of the ‘Schools.’ The Christmas vacation brought Symonds back to Clifton, and he writes thus to his sister :]

‘You<sup>1</sup> shall have a letter from me at the expense of Conington (who ought to be written to) and of my essay on the Helvetian Republic.

‘To-day I had a wondrous *Sehnsucht* to hear our choir once more. So I arose and went, not knowing what my lot would be. I was fortunate, for I heard “The King shall rejoice”; given, I suppose, in honour of Canon Girdlestone, for it must be his last Sunday. Afterwards there came Mendelssohn’s Christmas Hymn; holy song, ever associated with my better feelings, and a sense of dreamy winter nights. Other choirs may sing as loud, but none can sing so sweetly and so softly as Mr. Corfe’s. They brought the tears into my eyes, as I called to mind “The days when I remember to have been joyful and free from blame.” It cannot be so again; for doubts have come up to blur my trust in much that Christmas tells us of; and I have long, long lost the strange early feeling that hung about our cathedral music. Still, to-night I seemed to go back to purer days, and the fresh children’s voices smoothly whispering the degradation, or loudly heralding the God-head of Christ, brought back again odd memories. I shut my eyes, and the old scene of the cathedral, years ago, came back upon my sight. It seemed that I was standing in the sombre shadows of the dimly lighted nave, and heard the organ sighing and sobbing plaintively to some Beethoven melody. Then came sweeping by the white-robed procession—canon, priest, and chorister—led by the sacristan with his silver rod and the holy dove upon it. The black mass of people divided to let the

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte. Clifton, December 9, 1861.

gleaming thread of waving surplices pass on. At the cloister door they paused ; the choir parted, and standing, cap in hand, they bowed while the canon walked between. Then the airy band dissolved, and their flowing skirts went flitting here and there amid the crowd. The cluster of globed lamps that swung across the pillared gloom seemed hazy with its own imperfect light. Vast caverns of the deepest black marked the branching of the spandrils, where stray gleams of light rested on carved angels' wings. Far off in the long north aisle, the kneeling statue of that mourning lady glimmered on the silent windows. Over all the dying organ made one deep harmony, and tuned my soul to the solemn beauty of the scene. Then it ceased, a shuffling of feet, and a moving of the people to the northern door, and outside the winter night was grey on the gaunt and leafless green ; behind us the prophet-painted panes shone dimly in the waning lights within the choir.

'All this I seemed to see, and I felt as young and awestruck as I used to feel when papa took me on a winter afternoon from Berkeley Square. But with this childish feeling was mixed a deeper and a holier sense of sublimity, such as I felt two years ago.

'Nothing more remains to tell, except that I feel "dree," and that the *Seelensehnsucht* has rather coiled itself afresh.

'Do not try to answer this ; you cannot write sentimental letters such as Miss Girard and I delight in. A matter of fact answer to a sentimental letter only irritates the receiver, who wonders he could have written such trash as to call forth such a contemptible reply. You may write a letter, but attempt not an answer, unless Weston has revived holy memories and made your soul melodious with melancholy pleasure. Good-night.'

[Symonds at this period came under the influence of two very remarkable people, Mrs. B—— to whom he paid a short visit at Cheltenham, and Mme. Jenny Lind Goldschmidt, who visited his father at Clifton, and for whom he conceived the highest enthusiasm and veneration. At Cheltenham the emotional side of Symonds's religious temperament was profoundly stirred by burning conversation—discussions upon

faith, long analysis of mental sorrows and pains—which he carried on in company of his distinguished hostess: ‘She talked vehemently of how she suffered in her mind. As she lay there exquisitely slender and mobile, full length on the sofa, she did look torn by demons. She told me of the torture of her thought, how religious, social, political doubt weighed on her. She never lost her feeling of God, but could not help thinking of Him as a tyrant. Sympathised with me, when I said such thoughts goaded one on to suicide as a means of finding out the truth.’ The impression created by this visit to Cheltenham was very great, and the result of it may be traced through many subsequent days of the Diary. In a later conversation with his hostess, after drawing a picture of unsatisfied ambition, he adds, ‘The consciousness of genius is the only thing desirable in life, and impotence is the strongest procuress of suicide. I went away filled with the idea of the noblest womanhood I had ever met. The most gorgeous golden sunset, and a perfect double rainbow made a fine background to my thoughts of that great lady. Hope rose behind despondency.’

An elaborate account of Mme. Goldschmidt’s concerts, show how deep a hold the great singer took upon the æsthetic and emotional side of young Symonds’s nature.

The following notes of Mme. Goldschmidt’s conversation must have been made soon after a visit which she paid to Dr. Symonds at Clifton Hill House:]

‘CLIFTON, *April 23.*

“‘If I had nothing but music in the world it would be enough.

“‘I become a different thing when I sing—different body, different soul.

“‘I cannot understand how people do not see how the senses are connected.

“‘What I have suffered from my sense of smell! My youth was misery from my acuteness of sensibility. Very sensitive people may go wrong, may make mistakes; they



cannot be very wicked. I only learned what crimes were possible by being accused of them.

“Some poetry will not do for music—not Shakespeare, nor Shelley, nor Tennyson.” I repeated “Blow, blow,” and she said, “That might be set to a Volkston.” I repeated “I sang of the dancing stars,” and she said, “There is too much thought there: it has all the passions of the heart—dancing stars, too, how incongruous!” “Every line of Milton could be sung. For music we must have one feeling, one harmony, not a series of broken lights. Dryden can be sung, he is simple and definite. Even Handel could not compose for Tennyson. His thoughts are nice, but his words will not flow in music, and he has too much condensation of ideas.” “Tennyson takes all the solid sharp words and puts them together. Music cannot come between. He does not flow. He cannot like music.” “Heine’s songs run into music at once; they are music.” “Italian is all music—every word.” Noticed how she dwelt on the connection of words and music.’

*April 27.*—Papa read out ‘Guinevere’ to-night. She seized every strong point, and acted it in her features, following the poetry with expression. She cried bitterly, and at the end said, ‘I feel like Arthur or Guinevere. I must be one or the other.’ It had affected her like tragedy. Then papa asked her to sing, and at first she could not—‘The vibrations will clash,’ she said. You cannot modulate from poetry to music, in other words. How deeply this remark lies at the root of art, of the independence of the arts.

Soon, however, she got up and sang airs from the ‘Penseroso,’ and an air of Mendelssohn’s to Heine’s song, ‘Auf Flügeln des Gesanges.’ She accompanied herself, and modulated most exquisitely with various shades of melody.

Her hates are vivid as her likes. She takes both at first sight, judging faces, she says, unerringly. Miss E. called to-day; she bowed, and instantly left the room. X—— came to stay, and she saw his coarseness at once. He is incult but clever; like ——, a self-reliant, vigorous man, full of impudence, a man who told Tennyson to his face that his ‘Sea Dreams’ had no artistic coherence.

She is very humble and careless of self. 'My poor, humble self,' oddly pronounced, is often on her lips ; but she never cringes or loses dignity. Simple and unassuming, she does and says what she likes, walks with countesses, tells Colenso what she thinks of him, and queens it.

She comments on the charm of having a definite line in life, an art to live for ; yet she would not have any of her children brought up to music as a profession.

She cannot bear Goethe. His and Hegel's influences have made the Germans, she thinks, irreligious. Biography she does not like, because it destroys great men, revealing the faults their valets see. 'What good can we get from seeing how Bacon fell? Ah, that did give me pain. I would sooner have known evil of some near friend.' So terrible to her is any blot on the ideal.

[On March 22, 1862, Symonds came out second to Caird in the Jenkyns. And, on April 7, he left for Great Malvern on a reading party with Mr. Stephens. Late in May he went in for his 'Greats,' and, though ill and nervous, supported by sleeping-draught and pick-me-up, he secured a first, with papers which, as he had resolved at Coniston, were described by an examiner as 'all that could be desired.' 'Among the many letters of congratulation I got, Jowett's to papa was the most pleasant. He says an examiner told him I was the best man in.' He took his degree on June 26, and on June 29, on the verge of starting for a foreign journey with his father and sister, he makes the following characteristic entry : 'Certainly Oxford honours are a poor thing. The glory of them soon departs, the pleasure fleets away, and we have another struggle rising up at once. Yet I can never be too thankful for having been able to give papa so great satisfaction. All the trouble I had was well compensated by his pleasure, and the thought of that is my most solid gain.'

Here, at the close of Symonds's undergraduate career, I may introduce his own summing up of the advantages and disadvantages of the University system, as they presented themselves to him through his experience, and some characteristic

notices of the two minds, Conington's and Jowett's, which most affected him in his undergraduate days.]

The<sup>1</sup> fault of my education as a preparation for literature was that it was exclusively literary. Neither at Clifton, nor at Harrow, nor yet at Oxford, did I learn any one thing thoroughly. I failed to grasp the merest elements of mathematics, absorbed nothing of physical science, did not acquire modern languages with accuracy, and even in Greek and Latin scholarship (upon which I spent so many years), attained to only superficial knowledge. The system of teaching at Harrow was itself wretchedly inadequate. At Oxford I did much harder work; but there even philosophy was studied mainly from the rhetorical point of view. We were taught to write upon a vast variety of debatable topics, and to acquire some smatterings of what the several schools had uttered on them; but there was no robust mental training, no process by which the man was compelled to think. Worse than that, aspirants after honours were habituated to deal cleverly with words and phrases, and to criticise without substantial knowledge. They never grew familiar with the solid facts of the world and human nature, except by natural instinct and proclivity. This absence of intellectual gymnastic prepared me for an amateurishness in literature which has ever clung about me.

As I have said, there was an almost total defect of discipline in tough studies, both at Harrow and at Oxford. In a sort of blundering way the docile among us were made to recognise the force of duty; and that was pretty nearly all we gained. In other words, we learned to work for less tangible rewards than wages. But we learned very little else of solid value. Yet I am bound to admit that this great educational defect had, as the French say, its educational quality. This quality was freedom of choice, modified by sympathy and circumstance in self-formation. We were comparatively unspoiled by drill of any kind. Our minds were made less by the curriculum than by our friends, the subjects we were instinctively adapted for, and our spontaneously selected lines of reading. Plodding

<sup>1</sup> Autobiography.

along at the curriculum, and taking great interest in the whole of it at points where it coincided with my literary bent, I obtained thus, not indeed the method of study, but the zeal for study, and contracted habits which made study and production of one sort or another the duty and necessity of my subsequent existence.

The weakness of the training displayed itself, nevertheless, even in this liberty of choice. Some of my contemporaries were by nature provided with strong political interests. Outside the curriculum they grew and flourished, and evolved their personalities by reading the newspapers and taking part in Union debates. Others, like G. A. Simcox and A. C. Swinburne, pursued an ideal of more or less effective genius. But many of the rest of us, who had proclivities but no commanding bias, wandered too helplessly about between duty to the curriculum and indulgence of individual undisciplined instincts. I could mention men who might have been musicians or painters, but who wasted their time at Oxford in aimless strumming on the piano, and silly sketching, because there was no career of industry provided for them. They served the curriculum badly. Their natural talents found no strengthening exercise.

With this latter sort I can class myself. I went philandering around music, heraldry, the fine arts, and literary studies ruled by sentiment. I wrote weak poetry. I dreamed in ante-chapels. I mooned in canoes along the banks of the Cherwell, or among yellow water-lilies at Godstow. I rode across the country, larking on half-broken hacks. I indulged day-dreams, and acted trivial tragedies of love, and hate, and reconciliation with my miscellaneous set of friends. But in all these things I got no grasp on any serious business.

It may be questioned here whether I was framed by temperament to profit by a methodical system of education. That, I admit, is a grave problem. But I do think that there were forces in me which might have been more wholesomely developed, and debilities which ought to have been more austere repressed.

[These opinions upon the University system coincide to a certain extent with those which Symonds records as being held by Mr. Congreve, the Positivist Philosopher.]

Against<sup>1</sup> the Oxford system generally Congreve spoke strongly. 'Oxford,' he said, 'is a pleasant social place, but an enervating intellectual atmosphere. Jowett's habit of finding "a kind of truth," the study of dreamers like Plato, the making of verses, the pride of hot undigested philosophy; all tend to mere Saturday Reviewing, want of aim, and the sleet of words which oppresses the world in the shape of magazines and ephemeral literature. History is the proper training; the examination should be changed, men should be able to take up distinct lines, and, as much as possible, should be examined by their teachers. Coaching in Oxford is mere cramming by young men without experience, of young men they do not comprehend, and who themselves desire nothing beyond what will pay in the schools. A Bachelor fresh from the pressure of the Science Schools is a painful anomaly. But he settles down after a time, for he finds that he must unload his brain of its heated contents. The Balliol system of writing is bad; a man may use his pen in taking notes for his own purposes, but he should never frame his thoughts in words for others till he is mature, and has facts to tell the world. Magazining is only a temporary disease. The great books of the world might easily be read through, if people would consent to miss the drifting mass of light literature.'

Meanwhile, the society of friends and counsellors whom I was free to choose kept exercising a salutary influence. Though I could not share Green's powerful political and philosophical interests, I felt the force of his character. Conington directed me upon the path of literature by principles of common sense and manly prosaic taste. He snubbed and at the same time stimulated my vague sensibilities to beauty. He made me reflect and distinguish in matters of art by bringing clearly into prominence his scholar's sense of what is great or delicate in prose and poetry, against the background of

<sup>1</sup> Autobiography.



his insusceptibility to nature, music, painting, sculpture. I began through him to see that literature is something by itself, not part of an iridescent nebula, including all our cult for loveliness. This lesson was salutary, and I owe much to the years of close intimacy I passed with him. Yet I am glad that I was created with a temperament less exclusively literary than his. I am thankful that I preserved a sense of the remote connections between all our sensibilities, for this has prevented me from isolating literature, although I recognise its independence. Jowett, when I came under his notice, proved a far more potent master of my mind than Conington. I immediately recognised something quite unique in his mental and moral personality. He wore the halo then of martyrdom around him, and dazzled young-eyed enthusiasts. 'Essays and Reviews' had made a scandalous success, and the Oxford Conservatives were refusing to endow the Greek chair which Benjamin Jowett held.

I feel inclined to break this paragraph, and to indulge in some detailed reminiscences of Jowett. When I went up to Balliol, in the autumn of 1858, my father told me to call on Professor Jowett. He was not my tutor, but my father had recently sat next him at a Magdalen Gaudy. I think I took a letter from my father to the great mysteriously revered man. I found him dozing in an armchair over a dying fire. His rooms were then in Fisher Buildings, looking out upon the Broad. It was a panelled room, with old-fashioned wooden mantel-piece. He roused himself, looked at the letter, looked at me, and said half dreamily: 'I do not think I know your father.' Then, after an awkward pause, he rose, and added: 'Good-bye, Mr. Symonds.' I had gone with all a boy's trepidation to call on him. I took with me, moreover, something over-added of the shyness which my dependence on my father engendered. This dismissal, therefore, hurt me exceedingly.

I saw nothing more of Jowett for at least a year. But just before I went in for Moderations, he sent for me, and asked me to bring him Greek and Latin prose and verses. So far as I remember, I was allowed to select pieces. The few evenings in which he coached me made me feel, for the first time, what



it was to be taught. He said very little, gave me no 'tips.' But somehow he made me comprehend what I had to aim at, and how I had to go about it. In some now to me unapprehended way, he showed me how to use my reading in Greek for the purpose of writing. I am sure that the iambics I produced for those few lessons were better than the thousands I had laboured at before. Such influence, if continued, might have educed the scholar in me, but I went into the Schools, obtained a first-class in Moderations, and Greek iambics were shelved.

Jowett's influence over my mind, however, continued and strengthened. When I began to read for 'Greats,' I took him an essay on some philosophical or historical subject every week. The work for this essay absorbed the greater portion of all my energies. I neglected everything, except my sentiments and fancies, for its sole production. And, in a certain way, I grew mightily under the discipline. I used to wait with intense eagerness, after reading my composition aloud, for his remarks. They were not much. 'That is very good, Mr. Symonds'; 'That is not so good as what you read last week'; 'You have been too prolix'; 'There are faults of taste in the peroration'; 'You do not see the point about Utilitarianism'; 'That is an admirable statement of Plato's relation to the Eleatic philosophers.' I can hear him saying these sentences now, bent before his fireplace in the tower-room of the new buildings. I treasured each small word up, and somehow felt the full force of them—expanded their leaves—until it filled my mind and penetrated the substance of my own thought about the essay. He taught me, indeed, to write; not to think scientifically, but to write as clearly as I could, and with as firm a grasp as I possessed upon my subject.

When the essay was over, Jowett made tea, or drank a glass of wine with me—far more often we had tea of the uncomfortable college sort, lukewarm, out of a large metal pot, in big clumsy cups. Conversation did not flow. Occasionally the subject of the essay led to some remarks from Jowett, but rarely. More often there was spasmodic talking about things in general—Jowett never suggesting a topic—I blunderingly

starting one hare after another—meeting silence or a quenching utterance—feeling myself indescribably stupid, and utterly beneath my own high level, but quitting the beloved presence with no diminution of an almost fanatical respect. Obscurely, but vividly, I felt my soul grow by his contact as it had never grown before. That was enough, and more than enough. I did not then, and do not now, know what the process may have been. I almost think the paucity of speech, the sort of intellectual paralysis produced by what I knew to be not unkindly and not stupid in the man I revered, was more effective and more stimulative than lucid exposition or fluent conversation would have been.

One evening he said to me : ‘I cannot hear your essay this evening, Mr. Symonds. I have just heard that Clough is dead.’ This was the first time, I believe, that the name of Clough reached my ears. Jowett proceeded : ‘He was the only man of genius, whom I knew to be a man of genius, that I have seen among the younger men at Balliol.’

On another evening he sat staring at the fire, and would not speak, and yet did not seem to want me to go. At last he said : ‘When I don’t say anything, people fancy I am thinking about something. Generally I am thinking about nothing at all. Good-night.’

At another time he said, *à propos* of nothing that I can remember : ‘Mr. Swinburne is a most curious young man. He used to bring me long and eloquent essays. He had a very remarkable power of language ; but it was all language. I could never find that he was following any line of thought.’

Jowett’s breakfast parties were more paralysing than his coaching hours. Nothing is anywhere drearier than a lot of people meeting at a breakfast. Here they met, stiff, awkward, shy, from their very reverence for Jowett. He sat, sipped tea, ate little, stared vacantly. Few spoke. The toast was heard crunching under desperate jaws of youths exasperated by their helplessness and silence. Nevertheless, it was a great event to go—although nobody shone, neither host nor guest.

Walking out with Jowett was, for me at least, no pleasure ; yet I coveted the honour. It seemed always impossible to

start a subject which would survive the exchange of four remarks. Jowett had the way of killing the innocent foundlings of his own and his companion's brain by some crushing and yet inconclusive observation.

Still, though Jowett had this influence over my mind, though Conington had another of the same generic sort, and though my father exercised one which was more penetrative than any, I feel bound to record that the most controlling influences of my life, the most enduring, those which are at present potent over me, belonged to none of those three men.

## CHAPTER V

## MANHOOD. FROM DEGREE TO FELLOWSHIP

Journey to Venice—Impressions of Venetian art—Padua—Verona—A rising in Milan—The books he read on the journey—Illness at Visp—Home again—First intimations of a literary career—Autobiographic poetry—Analysis of Haydn's 'Creation'—His psychological altitude—Stands for a fellowship at Queen's—A visit from Jowett at Clifton—Stands for a fellowship at Magdalen—And elected—Offer of a travelling tutorship—Attack upon him—Breakdown in health—Goes to Malvern—Wins the Chancellor's prize with an essay on 'The Renaissance.'

1862 [IMMEDIATELY after taking his degree, Symonds went abroad with his father and sister; this time through Munich, Innsbruck, and over the Finstermünz to Venice. Though the Diary of this journey is full, as usual, the Autobiography passes it over in a few lines; yet in various ways it was important. For the first time Symonds 'touched the city of the lagoons.' 'The magic of the place enthralled me,' he says, 'and it has never wholly lost that early fascination.' The Symondses stayed at the Hotel Europa, occupying 'three bedrooms on a side street, and a sitting-room on the Canal *au premier*.' Venetian painting made the deepest impression on Symonds, and he begins to annotate, analyse, marshal his impressions on paper, as is his wont.

*Sunday, July 13.*—I<sup>1</sup> am writing on Sunday morning alone, papa and Charlotte being in the English Church. I feel rather like the lady in the 'Palace of Art.'

Indeed the excellences of the Venetian School, like those of the best music, seem at first sight rather to harmonise the soul and impregnate it with beauty than to root themselves in the memory. The Venetians have little beauty of form; there

<sup>1</sup> Diary.

is no high ideal at which they aim ; and this distinguishes them from the schools of Lionardo and Raphael. In the same way their composition is not designedly symmetrical. They present no artificial grouping. Like Rubens, life is their chief study. To represent life and action is their aim. And like Rubens, they feel the beauty of colour far more than that of form. Tintoretto, for his rapidity of execution and vast sweep of brush, is the Venetian Rubens ; but he is surpassed in colouring by Veronese, whose gorgeous hues, lucid medium, and splendid disposition of light and shadow, place him on a par with the great Antwerpian. Yet in both Tintoretto and Veronese there is a majesty and warmth of hue which Rubens never reaches. Their rich amber hair and glowing flesh of ivory *morbidezza* are more lustrous than the pure gold tresses and rosy whiteness of the Flemish beauties. And though the Venetians always represent life and Nature more than the ideal, they do not fall into the disgusting excesses of Rubens ; their passion is more refined, nor is their canvas ever defiled with such brutality as the 'Murder of the Innocents' at Munich. It is the luxury of life in the burning South that they have caught, the pomp and gardens and blue hills and mighty palaces of Italy ; all these seem concentrated in the sentiment and colour of their pictures. If we ask ourselves why some of the greatest Venetian masters are so little known, the answer is simple—the essence of their works cannot be represented by engraving. Raphael is better often in a line engraving than on canvas, because his chief power lies in form and expression and not colouring. Michael Angelo's gigantic figures and elaborate grouping can in like manner be easily transferred to copper. But the Venetians, wanting in ideal beauty and wanting in composition, excelling as they do all artists in the breadth and colour and perfume of luxurious reality—in the pomp and pride of life—become mere skeletons when separated from the hues they have thrown around them like an atmosphere. This I felt in the Accademia, which we visited after dinner. The names of Vivarini, Carpaccio, and Bonifazio I had barely heard of, but I found them great artists. Vivarini is the Venetian Perugino ; his figures have a great dignity and

sweetness ; in the Church of St. John and St. Paul is a fine 'St. Christopher and St. Sebastian,' and above it a 'Pietà' exactly like the grand Mantegna at Berlin. Vittore Carpaccio has painted a long series of pictures representing the history of St. Ursula. There is no power of perspective in them, but great beauty of colour, dignity of attitude, and grace of feature. His 'Meeting of Ann and Joachim' is a splendid piece of bright colouring, and so is his apotheosis of St. Ursula. The details of his pictures are full of those everyday incidents that we remark in Benozzo Gozzoli and Pinturicchio.

The passage of the Venetian school from the Byzantine influence is extremely interesting. One great enthroned Madonna, by Giovanni d'Alemagna, illustrates the modification of her grim visage and almond eyes in its earliest stage. Scenes from the life of Christ, painted in the Missal style, with gold markings for the drapery folds, carry on the growth. Gian Bellini is still under its influence. Among the many beautiful pictures of his in Venice, there is none in which the Virgin is not stiff and conventional, with a stern forbidding aspect, and long narrow eyes. By far his finest work is in the Church of St. John and St. Paul. There the saints and Fathers of the Church about the throne are emancipated from Byzantine ugliness. Madonna, as the most sacred personage, retains most of the conventional aspect. Of Gentile Bellini, there are one or two historical pictures, interesting because they show how unchanged Venice is. Even the pigeons flutter in those paintings about St. Mark's as they do now. From Bellini to Titian is a vast leap. The Assunta wholly satisfied me. Such pasturage of colour, such superb action, such dignity of adoration I have never seen. I would sooner have this picture than the San Sisto. Titian's Virgin, of course, is not so unearthly, or even so beautiful. But she has a full warm splendour, and a humanity which the other lacks. The harmonies of colour and power of movement were intoxicating. This is to me a far greater picture than 'Pietro Martire.' No engraving does it justice. The details are all perfect, and the execution most careful. I think that the variety and beauty of the cherubs surpass Correggio, and certainly no one



but Titian painted such a figure as St. John. The action of the wounded monk in 'Peter Martyr' equals, but does not surpass it.

I wish I could give some notion of the luxury we enjoyed in gliding through the narrow canals. There, though the sun was blazing in an unclouded sky, those tall houses almost meeting overhead gave a delicious shade. From light to shadow we passed as the gondola swung round the corners to the warning cry of the oarsmen. To feel the air so soft and warm upon one's cheek, to feel the undulation of the green smooth water, to see those ancient palaces and profound glooms of deep-cast shadows over marble traceries of vines and eagled lions and angels was truly Venice. Sometimes our black gondola, like a great crocodile, dispersed a troop of little swimmers. The boys here are amphibious, and run about quite naked, but for a wrapper round the middle. They leapt and ran on land, broadening their chests with play. In the water they dived and swam and flung themselves about like ducks. Without shame or restraint, fair to look upon, but oh, how animal. One woman's face attracted me greatly. She was leaning from an upper window; against the dark background shone her light hair, tightly braided over a melancholy white face, not thin and sallow like so many of the Italians, but full and fresh-coloured, with blue eyes. From scenes like these, which I cannot describe, we passed into the Scuola di San Rocco. This is filled with pictures of Tintoretto, to the number of seventy-five. They are all in oils, but so executed as to take the place of frescoes, nor can much more time have been spent upon them than upon the ordinary fresco. Their impasto is very thin, and the stroke of the brush most rapid. No detail is finished, but general effect is everywhere regarded. They seem to have been injured by time and neglect, and their hurried painting has no doubt rendered them more susceptible of light, for all are faded with the exception of one roof piece. They display the usual fault of Tintoretto—no unity of design or grouping—and his constant power of rapid action. Some are very naturalistic, especially the carpenter's house, with its broken wall and beds, which form the scene of the Annunciation,

and the stable of the Nativity. The action of flight, and the whole strength of angelic personages, are most remarkable throughout. Satan in the 'Temptation' is a proud beautiful youth, with gaudy wings and bracelets. How different from the Old Man in Milton and Rembrandt. The grand Crucifixion seems to me devoid of unity, and excessively confused. In detail it is very fine, and the power of action displayed is enormous. One man engaged in nailing down the bad thief is a study from Michael Angelo. Another raising the good thief in the foreground presents a beautiful and bold line from arm to arm.

*Tuesday, July 15.*—We left about ten, highly satisfied. Venice has fully answered my expectations, and has not been hot or disagreeable, from the Canal water.

This day was scorching. I never felt so much misery and relaxation from heat. We stopped at Padua during all the midday. First we saw Giotto's Chapel. His colouring—pale and serene—is very different from the stern drawing and gorgeous hues of Vivarini. The expression in some of the faces is wonderfully naïve and well delineated. I noticed here, also, that the most sacred personages are always least free from conventionalism.

After seeing this chapel, we went into the Church of the Eremitani close by. It is a fine, dark Gothic building, chiefly remarkable for containing some grand frescoes of Mantegna. These interested me greatly, for I was able to see what a sudden emancipation from Byzantine forms and conventional modelling Andrea had attained by pure study of the antique. His figures are sharply defined, technically excellent, somewhat hard in colouring, and always remind one of statuary, of bas-relief. After having luncheon papa and I went out, in furious heat, to the old University, the halls and staircases of which are decorated with the names and arms of centuries of students and doctors. We saw some English there. At the door of St. Anthony's—*Il Santo* they call him here—we bought pretty rosaries. This church is one of N. Pisano's, fine and solemn. It is an attempt to unite the Gothic crucial design with Byzantine cupolas, after the fashion of St. Mark.

Nor is the attempt unsuccessful—especially from the exterior. Inside the church is white and bare, and severe, too much like a Belgian building. Indeed, the arrangement of the false chevet is wholly Belgian. Afterwards we dined, and then got to Verona, where we found it stifling.

MILAN, *Wednesday, July 16.*—The people of Milan are very unquiet to-night. They have been excited by a speech of Garibaldi, in which he denounced Napoleon, called him ‘traditore,’ ‘mosso da libidine,’ ‘capo di briganti, di assassini.’ The Milanese hate the French, and are beginning to weary of the Sardinian government, and because they have to pay heavier taxes they regret the Austrians. This promulgation of Garibaldi has roused them against France and Sardinia, and made them furious for a Republic. To-night they propose a demonstration; all the soldiers—cavalry, infantry, and National Guard—are in readiness to suppress it. While I was writing, a confused murmur reached our ears. We got up and ran to our window, which looks both up and down the street. Instantly we perceived that a large band of men, with lighted torches, were rapidly advancing up the street. A crowd formed in front of them. We saw men behind and at the sides. The bright red torches swayed about, burning and smoking with a glare upon the houses crowded with faces. Something seemed to interrupt their progress. A great noise arose, and the crowd increased. It was picturesque to see them toss their flambeaux up and down to make them shine, and in the distance each man looked like a shape of flame. Eschmann<sup>1</sup> came up and told us that this was one of four divisions of the demonstration; 400 of another had been taken prisoners, and these were surrounded with soldiers. The soldiers forced them to break up, the crowd dropped away, and so ended the *émeute*. I often wondered what a demonstration meant. This is a pretty and picturesque specimen.

BAVENO, *July 17.*—It may be interesting to record the books I took with me, bought and read during this tour. To begin, I had, of course, my Bible and Prayer-book in one, and my little ‘Daily Food.’ Then, there were the ‘Revelation’ and

<sup>1</sup> The Courier.

'Job,' each separate, the Greek Bucolic poets, and 'Hermann und Dorothea' in one volume, Plato's 'Republic' in Greek, the 'Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum,' Kugler's 'Handbook to Italian Painters,' Shelley's minor Poems, 'La Comtesse de Rudolstadt' (Deuxième Série), Green's 'Essay on Novels,' one volume of Shakespeare containing 'Cymbeline,' 'Lear,' and 'Othello.' I bought 'Valvèdre,' by George Sand, at Paris, at Munich a German and Italian lesson-book, at Venice an Italian Dictionary and a book called 'L'Art Moderne,' by Gautier. Then also papa gave me a pretty Virgil. I have read more or less of all these books except Green's 'Essay' and 'Job,' and, besides, I have read parts of the 'Cornhill,' 'Macmillan,' 'Murray,' one part of 'Orley Farm,' some of the 'Golden Treasury,' Tennyson, 'La Jolie Cordière,' by Saintine, some 'Paradise Lost,' and 'Tom Jones.'

*Friday, July 18.*—*Hôtel de la Poste, Isella on the Simplon.* Papa and I sat up rather late last night discussing Rubens and the Venetians, after I had read a portion of my diary to him. I had a bad night in consequence, for I revolved in my head an essay on Art.

*Tuesday, July 22.*—*Hôtel Gibbon, Lausanne.* I was so unwell on Sunday that papa gave up the notion of Zermatt and the Gemmi. We stayed at Visp all Sunday. I was in bed most of the day.

Yesterday we left at ten and drove to Sion. I thought my headache had come from the jolting of the carriage, or from sitting with my back to the horses. So papa kindly gave me a back seat, and I did not increase my headache. We arrived here at nine. I was extremely wretched, as indeed I am this morning, though now I can eat, which I could not before.

*Hôtel Byron, Villeneuve.*—I am now feeling better, though I have had a miserable day. Every inch of my body aches; the two mustard plasters, one on my back and one on my stomach, which were put on at Visp, make every posture uncomfortable; my scalp is sore and my bones tingle; queer shudders run down my back; my head is full of neuralgic pains; my eyes feel boiled, and are regular centres of agony, to move which is to set two instruments of torture in motion.

On the whole, I have felt like a parboiled lobster, saved even as a brand from the burning.

[It was necessary to record this last passage, because, as we shall find later on, Symonds attached great importance to his illness at Visp. Indeed, the whole journey was of moment in his career, and led presently to a formal opening of his 'artistic' studies.]

By August 1 Symonds was home again, and on August 2 he is 'enjoying the calm air, the green leaves, and sunshine of the place. Yet it feels cold. I began a book, lettered "Art and Literature," to-day, with a long article on the characteristic of the Venetian School.' On August 3 we find this: 'Stayed in all morning, partly because of my cold, partly to write "Theodore," a self-analytical expansion of my verse of July 7. I wrote 200 at a sitting, so they are doggerel.' August 4: 'Wrote at "Theodore."' August 5: 'Left for Malvern. On my way I completed "Theodore."'

I think that these entries, referring to Art and Literature on the one hand, to the writing of poetry on the other, are of great importance in the history of Symonds's career as a man of letters. It seems that now, after his success at Oxford, after the stimulus of a highly intellectual journey with his father, he was beginning, unconsciously perhaps, to feel his way along the path of literature, and to test his natural bias within that sphere of activity towards which he was being insensibly drawn. And the unconscious questioning continued for some time. At Malvern he debates with his reading friends, Mr. Robinson<sup>1</sup> and Mr. Courthope,<sup>2</sup> the subject of 'Art and Originality.' It began with the question of how far a painter might borrow from a poet or historian without being a copyist. 'I contended that all great poets were as much a part of the world's development as original. I showed how they took colour from their school, and affected it by their own individuality. I wished due attention paid to the historical point of view. I do not feel certain about all this. The

<sup>1</sup> Late Fellow and Bursar of New College, Oxford.

<sup>2</sup> Professor of Poetry in the University of Oxford.



history of the Van Eycks goes against it.' This is followed on August 20 by this significant remark: 'I am discontented, because I do not feel myself a poet, and do not see why I should not be one. It is vain and foolish—in part a jealousy of Conington's appreciation of C——.' After this there is a return to criticism, to artistic analysis—of music—as usual, enriched by the knowledge of painting, which he had acquired abroad; and from Sutton Court, his brother-in-law's house, he writes to Conington the following remarks, suggested by a fine performance of the 'Creation' at Gloucester. 'As I sat and thought of the first chapter of Genesis and heard Haydn's music, it seemed to me that I listened to a wise commentary. I called to mind Plato's definition of chaos, Milton's description of the angelic symphonies of light, and the chariot of God's Christ. I tried to remember what Raphael and Michael Angelo had modelled in form and colour to represent the power of God in the Creation; but there was nothing which spoke to me of utter desolation at the beginning, of mysterious breathing as the Spirit went forth upon the waters, of a low, still, permeating voice that gave the fiat, and of a definite blast of God's will, ending in the restless outgoing of intolerable light—like those strange inexplicable chords and combinations of symphonious instruments. Analysis of the reason of this virtue resident in sound, seems to me impossible. I can only mark out the province of sound from that of the other arts, and say that it is most powerful wherever the idea of motion is prevalent. Thus it would occupy a place like that of Plato's astronomy, and its science would be the science of motion, oral and visible, ruled by laws of abstract harmony. Music is at the same time the abstract science of all harmonious motion, and also its concrete expression to us. In its latter character it communicates those impressions of delight which are peculiar to it, and which still remain unanalysed. As such it represents the motion of the heavens, the life of the earth and the energy of man; as such it controls the tempest of the heart, the discord of anger and of fear, the harmony of love and adoration, the windless calm of obedience and contemplation. Further it cannot go. Form



and colour it leaves to painting, sculpture, and architecture, which are the geometry of art. Poetry is the metaphysic of art, dealing with the abstractions of music and the plastic arts, and adding to them her own province of pure intellectual thought.'

[This is a highly characteristic passage; it shows us the man deeply affected through his senses, which produce in him an emotion sublimated to its least definite and most pervasive form in music, and then instantly turning round to analyse this emotion. It illustrates the governing qualities of Symonds's personality, acute sensibility, and intense intellectual activity; he felt profoundly through his æsthetic sensibility, but his intellectual vigour would not let him rest there; he desired to know as well as to feel. This was his spiritual attitude at this most important period of his life. Had it not been for the grievous misfortunes which were so soon to overtake him, he would have pressed forward toward some union and fusion of these two qualities in him, his capacity for feeling, and his desire to know—with what result we can only now surmise.

As it was, the internal clash and conflict of two such powerful appetites inside a delicate frame, were wearing and grinding the man to powder. The next night is disturbed by violent dreams, and the day following his pain is poured forth in a torrent of splendid Augustinian Latin. Then the storm of passion dies away upon the close of this prayer: 'Make me calm without stagnation, wise without the delirium of little learning.'

It is not improbable that the resolution of his internal difficulties would have been achieved through the victory of the æsthetic and the absorption of the intellectual qualities, that he would have reached his knowledge through feeling. The following passage seems to indicate the advent of some such amalgamation:—'I felt in a good mood for musing' (he is in the cathedral); 'things came in upon me, as they sometimes do, rushing. I could not analyse or dwell upon impressions, but I felt past, present, and future bound in one, and all around me full of hurrying suggestions. It is a delightful but an exhausting condition, and one of much

nervousness ; for the soul trembles, unable to grasp all, yet desiring to hve sunshine for leaden days. The grandeur of the Athanasian Creed, as Tallis's music rolled it forth in sonorous ebb and flow and constant reconstruction of decaying chords, seemed to me more soul-crushing and full of intellectual pomp than I ever remembered it. The Greek spirit, terrible in its decadence, swept on upon its metaphysical chariot, bearing the image of a sublime creed, yet crushing remorselessly the bodies of all upon its path.' There is the Athanasian Creed intellectually grasped through the emotion of music. On the other hand, the following analysis of Mendelssohn's Motett on the 22nd Psalm seems to illustrate the opposite process or tendency ; here the æsthetic import of the music seems to be reached through an intellectual appreciation of the words.

'I have just come from hearing Mendelssohn's divine Motett on the 22nd Psalm. It is the most dramatic, sublime effort of music that I ever heard. Mendelssohn seems to have been inspired in writing it with the whole spirit of the Greek tragedians—that spirit which he caught during his labours on the 'Antigone,' that spirit which breathes throughout the conversation between the Chorus and the Princess as she is journeying to the tomb. It always seemed to me that that passage is the most pathetic in all the range of the Greek drama—the solitary sadness of Antigone taken up and echoed by the Chorus which repeats her lamentations in other words ; the wail of misery, succeeded by the passion of momentary struggling, and at last relieved by a sense of self-devotion, of nobility in death, of heroic and mythological apotheosis—strikes the deepest key which pagan music can command. Self-sacrifice to the gods, and obligations of kindred, and an equality of fate with men renowned in story, are the theme of the 'Antigone.' And if they can move us so, what are our emotions when we gaze upon the desolation and hear the agonising cries of Christ, when the interest involves the universe, when the victory gained is for all time ? This passion, the deification of suffering and conquest wrenched from agony, great painters have attempted to describe in pictures as majestic as the

'Crucifixion' of Tintoretto, or as desolate as the lonely 'Cross' of Rubens or Vandyke, sole against the lurid clouds with Him that hangs thereon. It is not, however, the province of painting to evolve the various steps in a great dramatic conception, to call up collateral points of interest, to suggest the commencement of the passion, follow it to its climax, and finally pronounce the moral of the conclusion. Painting arrests the passion at one point, and leaves the imagination to do the rest—it can never be consummately dramatic. Nor can poetry alone. It needs the accompaniments of scenery or dress, or the aid of music. But in such a situation as we are alluding to music is supreme. The monotonous minor of the opening cry, "My God, my God, look upon Me," introduces us to the solitary suffering of Christ. The voice is low and wailing, and we shudder till the attendant chorus takes up the theme, "And art so far from the voice of My complaint?" For the next two verses the same order is continued, the *commos* or conversation between the solo and chorus, in which the chorus acts as echo and interpreter of the lonely outpouring of the tenor voice, being sustained. Then for two verses the Protagonistes is silent, the theme of God's mercies in the olden time being suited to the reflection of the chorus. He bursts forth again with the words, "But as for Me, I am a worm," commenting with true Greek feeling upon the sentiments of the chorus, applying them to himself, and showing the futility of their poor consolations. In the succeeding voice the agony of lamentation is wrought to a terrific pitch; we reel and tremble beneath it, and feel that the sun is darkened and the stars give no light. Then is apparent that power of synthetical dramatic representation, which music possesses above all the other arts; for to heighten the passion, which must in poetry and painting have been confined to the expression of agony in the Sufferer, or sympathy in His friends, we have the chorus of yelling Israelites represented to us, "He trusted in God that He would deliver Him." Up swell the derisive minors, clash the trebles in exulting derision, a storm and fury of discord and triumph swells from organ and contending voices. It lulls, and the solitary tenor proceeds once more, supported

by the sympathising chorus. In the words, "and then Thou shalt bring Me to the very dust of death," we reach the lowest point of abasement. But now it is time that the tragic horror should be tempered, and again notice the resources of music. Without altering the artistic unity of the piece, without bringing down a *Deus ex machina*, without revolting the judgment with any sudden transition to premature victory, retaining the old minor, out swells a solitary treble, the first treble which has spoken alone during the whole anthem, and calls in an air loaded with pathetic pleading and excess of beauty to God: "Be not Thou far from Me, O God." This is taken up by the tenors and basses; gradually the pleading air acquires a solemn and almost triumphant beauty. Hope has passed in like a ray of light, but it is tempered and subdued. We feel that victory though it is, it has been bought with intense woe, and that the sorrow is not past. The hope is one of calmness and resignation, more than of expectation or confidence. And this feeling is kept up till the end of the piece, which concludes with a chorus—"The earth is the Lord's," solemn and sublime, yet still minor. The human will has been subdued, and homage is paid to God, who out of pain works deliverance. We are still before the cross, and He who hangs thereon is still bleeding, panting, suffering. But He has bowed His head, and knows the end, and feels that all is good and merciful, and that He is one with God.'

No doubt it was the fineness of his brain-structure which made Symonds at once so capable of æsthetic emotions, and so analytic of those emotions. But in this very fineness lay a danger. Throughout the Diary we begin to meet such ominous entries as, 'a strained feeling in my head'; and notes of this nature become more and more frequent. In fact, a breakdown of brain-power was menacing his career. And the struggle was the more wearing for Symonds, in that the spiritual conflict between emotion and knowledge was being carried over into the world of conduct and of action. A passage from a letter to a friend indicates the position clearly enough: 'It is one of the most terrible results of introspection that I find the weakness, vicious tendencies, morbid sensi-

bilities, and discontent deepened and intensified by all that I have learned in study, and by all that I have lost in faith. Old realities have become shadows, but these shadows still torment me. There is a restlessness of passion, an unending want of what can never be, that seem the peculiar Nemesis of a scholar's life. I envy you to be living in the world of things and not of thoughts—that is, to use the former as your battle-field of life, and to turn the latter round at times for your recreation. I, on the other hand, hear the great world of fact and action roaring for ever around me unintelligibly; my own sphere is one of phantoms, and my own battle a mere sciomachy. Thoughts and words are the men and things I deal with; but they are direful realities, full of suasions to passion, and maddening with impossible visions of beauty. This constant contact with the intangible results, in a word, is the state of Faust. We must go from thought to action, from the darkness of the study to the full light of the world—if we are strong enough. And here is another Nemesis of study—bodily weakness. Oh, woe to such as make their own dreams avenging Furies, and are unable to escape, to be at peace! Like Faust, life for such men is only found through vice, and they become human only after Medean baths of witchcraft and sense-searing indulgence.'

The situation seems clear enough; in one region emotion and intellect are at war, in the other thought and action. Emotions generate a passion, an appetite; intellect analyses the emotions into thoughts; thought is unsatisfying to the appetite which emotion has created, and that appetite demands the translation of the thought into action, but health and conscience bar the way. This is a state of mind known to men like Leopardi; but it was terrible that one so young as Symonds should already have attained such lucid vision of the case. This letter seems to me to prefigure his future life. He did take to action—to creative action—in the vast amount of literary work which flowed from him during the next thirty years; to civic action in the duties which he performed so well, first at Clifton, and then at Davos; to enjoyment of life in the unconventional freedom which Switzerland and



Italy afforded to his active temperament. But there was a long and dolorous journey to be taken before he attained to the liberty of action which was in fact the full effectuation of his own personality.

Three fellowships were open for competition during the Autumn term of 1862. Jowett recommended Symonds to stand for them in turn. Queen's came first. He entered for it on October 3, and failed to get it. '*October 8.*—Waited all day for the election. At six, I heard that Elton and Maidlow were elected. Facts are more significant than feelings. Reached home about 1 A.M.'

While under examination, he wrote to his sister :]

'Thank <sup>1</sup> you for your letter. It was very nice to get so many birthday congratulations in my solitude.

'Twenty-two years is a good age—an age certainly at which I ought to be better, stronger, more fixed in character, and more developed in organisation than I am. If birthdays are of any use, they serve at least to remind us of such truths as this ; and so little by little we become accustomed to take our lowly places in life, and not to fret onwards for what is not to be. I do not see any reason why we should expect unhappiness in the future. Every year lessens our discontent, hardens us to the chances of the world, dries up some spring of yearning or vain fancy, and so makes us more equable, and more ready for the future. It is not in what we have to bear, but in the way that we can bear it, that our happiness or misery consists. Nor do I believe that any pangs can be at the same time so acute, and so disgraceful, as those which in seasons of calm weather we create for ourselves in our own hearts. The prayers that in youth we make for genius, wealth and beauty, as we grow older become prayers for peace, so that each year brings us nearer to the aspiration of St. Augustine : " O Lord, grant us Thy peace. O Lord, grant us the peace of Thy Sabbath. O Lord, grant us the peace of Thy Sabbath which has no evening."

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte. Oxford, October 5, 1862.



‘There is something strange and touching in these prayers for rest, and in the passionate longing which, amid the noise of business, or of pleasure, comes over all of us, for a windless calm of dependence upon God. In the examination on Friday afternoon, I could hardly translate one sentence of an old Greek poem, it touched me so. A mother had been cast adrift with her baby on the waters, and the child was sleeping, but the mother strove with terror for a time, and then bent over the little face, and cried : “Sleep, baby, and let the seas be still, and let our woes unmeasured cease.” It seemed to me that this was a type of the useless unreasoning prayers which every one is making on the waves of life. They know that the seas must rage and the troubles must fall, but yet there is that within them which bids them think of peace, and somehow assures them that it is not far off. Nor is it far off, for death is always near, and we doubt not but that he comes as a friend to all men, ringing vesper bells, and sounding no alarm in the darkness of the night.

‘If these lines are too exalted and visionary, a birthday and a solitary Sunday must excuse them. I have answered one thought in your letter. For the other, if I am much to you, you know that you are much to me—how much we neither of us can calculate. Wait and see whether I be elected at Queen’s before you give me anything. A photograph for my rooms in case of my getting them would be a most acceptable present. If not, M. Müller is the book I should like.

‘*P.S.*—This letter need not be all read out ; for, though no secret, it is too dithyrambic for the breakfast-table.’

[The next fellowship was at Magdalen ; and in the meantime Jowett came to stay at Clifton Hill House.]

*October 15.*<sup>1</sup>—Had a pleasant *tête-à-tête* with Jowett. He talked about fellowships, and about staying up at Oxford. That he does not wholly approve of. He calls it living in a hothouse, and says men get braced in London. About health, he thinks young men of my age are apt to pule. To read

<sup>1</sup> Diary.

conscientiously for years on one subject requires peculiar gifts. Great perseverance and freshness are needed; for after a time the acquisition of knowledge becomes tedious, and its reconstruction ceases to be anything but restitution. He spoke about the habit some men acquire of using words without thoughts. They write beautifully and cleverly, but neither they nor their readers can tell what they mean.

[The examination at Magdalen began on October 21, and the following entries occur:]

*October 25.*—‘I have been doing a Latin Essay, “*Ut pictura poesis*,” a nice enough subject had it been English. I noticed, when I was doing verses, that a little greenfinch had got into the hall and could not find its way out. The bird’s feet were entangled with cobwebs from the ceiling, and it clung wildly to the wires of the oriel by the dais. I found the poor thing tame and exhausted; I took it in my hands, and removed the cobwebs, and then I let it fly forth from the open window into the clear autumnal sky, fresh with sunlight after rain. The creature sat dazed upon a battlement, and then hopped to another, and pecked a little moss. At last it felt its freedom, chirruped, and was away toward the woods. So would that some one might release me.’

[Symonds very much wished to be elected at Magdalen; the stately buildings, the magnificent chapel services, the aroma of the place suited his taste. ‘*Quam dilecta sunt templa Magdalenæ. Nunquam aliquid adeo desideravi*,’ he had written during the examination; and while waiting for the announcement of the issue, he was highly nervous. Characteristically he interjects: ‘By the way, how ridiculous Pantheism seems at a moment when I am so keenly individualised!’

The suspense was soon at an end; Symonds was elected unanimously. ‘That night I dined in hall as a stranger. All the Fellows took wine with me. It was the festival of the restitution of the Fellows, and after hall the whole College,

on and off the foundation, drank of a great cup, standing and saying, "Jus suum cuique." In common room Knight made me a short speech, which I answered with a few words. The bells rang a merry peal for my election.' On the 27th he was admitted Probationary Fellow, and on November 1st he went into his rooms in College, cloisters 8, one pair left. He took leave of his lodgings at Nalder's, 56 St. Giles, in this letter to his friend, Mr. Stephens: 'It is a sad and solemn thing to leave a house where one has thought, worked, and felt intensely, with pain and with pleasure, with success and disappointment, under depression and hope; and where, for the most part, solitude has been the condition of one's communings. The recollection of your friendship will always make Nalder's a pleasant place in my memory. Yet here I have been absolutely at times alone, not in respect of company, but in spirit. And this, I think, is what now appals me. . . . As I grow my sensibilities become more tender, and this year has been a marvellous one for me. For its successes I have all reason to be most humbly thankful, and for its soul-searching sorrows I have also reason to thank God.'

Immediately after moving into Magdalen, Symonds received the offer of acting as tutor to young Lord Pembroke, then at Eton. He was uncertain what course to take, and went home to consult his father. The conversation that evening naturally raised the whole question of a career. Symonds stated his 'ambition rather for literature than for anything else, and carelessness for politics and Parliament.' The upshot was that he determined to remain in Oxford, try to find tutorial work, and to eat dinners in London.]

'I<sup>1</sup> will begin a letter to-day, and shall probably not send till to-morrow. We had a solemn dinner last night in the Bursary, on the occasion of what is mysteriously called "Pippin Audit"; of the origin of this, and many other phrases connected with the College, no one, not even Dr. Bloxam, who has devoted a lifetime to Magdalen Antiquities, can give any account. Certain it is that, on the last day but

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte. Magdalen College, January 30, 1863.

two of January, there is a formal audit of the College accounts, and in the evening a great festival is held, marked by a bowl of roasted golden pippins. If the College business is treated with no more lucidity than the steward evinced in his speech last night, I am afraid that many incomprehensible questions about our finances might easily be answered. Such a meeting is pleasant in its way, it makes one feel the magnitude, and I wish it made everybody feel the responsibility of such a body. Thirty thousand pounds have been received by them for good or ill as their annual revenue in the day time, and in the evening they celebrated their society by a sumptuous festivity. I was glad enough to escape a little before tea, and to walk with Bramley round the walks in the moonlight. Indeed, if the great gates were not always locked, or if I possessed a key, I should often walk there at night. The broad meadow and the cloister trees chequering the path with moonlight, the sparkle of the water, the dim rows of elms in the park, and shadowing deer beneath them, the tower rising alone against the clear grey sky, all make a beautiful picture—a little too ghostly, perhaps, for solitude—the long paths dimly illuminated on each side, and diminishing into black shadow, seem always instinct with spirits that might become visible, and across the large field, with its wreaths of mist, one cannot help drawing floating ghosts.’

[I must briefly refer to an event which proved of most serious consequence to a man of Symonds’s sensitive and febrile temperament. A quondam friend sought, by means of garbled letters, to damage Symonds’s character at Magdalen. He entirely failed in his object. But the unexpectedness of the blow, and the treachery of a man he had trusted, the annoyance at home, the odious necessity of defending himself, so preyed upon his nerves and brain, worn by a perpetual internal conflict, and excited by the recent strain of two fellowship examinations, as to precipitate a physical crisis which was already imminent. He bore up bravely, but, as he says himself: ‘The long strain told upon me only the more powerfully, I think, because the effects were not felt at once. I do not

think I should ever have got on well with the Magdalen Fellows of that epoch; and now I was so sorely wounded in my soul, so sensitive and shy, that I could not dream of admitting one of them to my intimacy.' In short, his pleasure and his future in Magdalen were wrecked, as it seemed to him. A brief journey to Belgium with his friend Stephens, at the outset of which they were all but drowned off Calais pier, and contracted severe chills and rheumatism, did nothing to restore his peace of mind or health of body. During the journey he was reading books on the Renaissance, 'having in contemplation the writing of an Essay on that subject for the Chancellor's Prize.' In March of 1863 he began the Lent Term with six pupils in philosophy, and Mr. Jowett wrote to his father as follows:

'MY DEAR DR. SYMONDS,—Though I was quite sincere in not wishing my name (which is getting notorious) brought before the public more than is necessary, I am very grateful to you, and very sensible of the honour of having your Essay ["On Waste"] dedicated to me.

'I truly feel that during the last few weeks I have much to be thankful for, and I only hope that I shall be able to repay the kindness and support of friends and pupils by increasing devotion to the interests of young men.

'I have read your Essay with great pleasure. Two "wastes" occur to my mind—1st. The waste of the promise of youth from unfavourable soil and circumstances. I am always struck by the ability of a large number of the Oxford undergraduates. And yet few of these appear to possess the true seed of success in after life.

'The other waste is the waste of the lost classics, which, I think, is much more than compensated by the criticism to which their loss has given birth. It seems to me really true that an ancient Greek or Roman (even an historian or philosopher), with all antiquity before him, did not really know as much of ancient history as we do. Perhaps he sunk under the weight of materials, and certainly, if all the classics had been preserved, it is difficult to understand how modern literature

would have sprung up. I think we have quite as much of them as could really be of use.

‘I took a walk with John before he left. I thought him very able, and much improved in ability since he went into the schools. I do not think his ill health has been any disadvantage to him mentally, but rather the reverse, although this seems strange.—Ever yours sincerely,

B. JOWETT.

‘Many thanks for the photographs.’

But after three weeks the crisis arrived; Symonds’s health gave way suddenly, and, as he says, ‘I have never been a strong man since.’]

‘My<sup>1</sup> illness declared itself one night in the form of a horrible dream, the motive of which was that I saw a weak old man being gradually bruised to death with clubs. Next morning I rose with the certainty that something serious had happened to my brain. Nor was I mistaken. During the next three years I hardly used my head or eyes at all for intellectual work, and it was fully ten years before they recovered anything like their natural vigour; while in the interval I began to be consumptive. I do not doubt that the larger part of this physical distress was the result of what I suffered at Magdalen, coming after the labour of reading for my degree, and the obscure fever I had at Visp.’

[Immediately after this collapse he went to Malvern, in company with his sister.]

‘I<sup>2</sup> am very glad to hear that you so much like to go with me to Malvern. I am sure I should enjoy it immensely; and though I ought to hope it will not be necessary, I cannot help feeling that I should be disappointed were I to decide upon staying here. It is hard for me to judge what I ought to do, for, though I was very uncomfortable yesterday, I feel stronger to-day, and so it goes on. Much of my time I spend in our chapel. The calm of music, which once I used to enjoy, but which I thought had vanished for ever, seems to have returned

<sup>1</sup> Autobiography.

<sup>2</sup> To his sister Charlotte. Magdalen College, Oxford, Feb. 25, 1863.



to me, and I take advantage of our daily services to employ my time without exercising my mind. In the interval between morning and evening prayers I ride—sometimes twice a day, once to exercise my mare, Doefoot, gently, and again to stir my own blood. There is a humility and resignation, and even a kind of tranquillity in weakness, which seems to answer in an unexpected fashion that prayer of “*Dona nobis pacem, Domine!*” which we are ever scattering in stronger moments. I shall decide for myself on Friday about Malvern, unless papa thinks it wiser at once to settle on our going, in which case I should be glad of an authoritative letter, recommending a fortnight’s change. What will become of Doefoot I hardly know.’

[At Malvern Symonds and his sister lodged in Cleveland House; and there, though suffering acutely from his brain, and with ‘eyes weak and inflamed, so that he has to wear shades and spectacles,’ he completed the study of the Renaissance which won the Chancellor’s Essay. With the recitation of this composition he closed his residential career at Oxford. The reference in his Diary is characteristic: ‘*June 24, 1863.—* Since I wrote last in this book I have got the English Essay Prize. Papa and Charlotte heard me recite it before the Prince and Princess of Wales. I have made a new and pleasant acquaintance, L. G. Mylne.’]

## CHAPTER VI

## MANHOOD. FELLOWSHIP TO MARRIAGE

Sent to Switzerland by Dr. Symonds—Strasburg—Engelberg—Description of scenery—Interlaken—Mürren—Arrival of the Norths—Technical training of the eye necessary for sound criticism of Painting—At Uetliberg with T. H. Green—Goethe's Proem to 'Gott und Welt.'—R—E—Symonds at the christening of a Swiss peasant's daughter—Leipzig Fair—Received full Fellow at Magdalen—Health still bad—Journey to Italy—At Castellamare—Lucretius on *Ennui*—Ill health—Returns to England—Friendship with H. G. Dakyns—Settles in London—Dread of solitude—Courts Miss North—Marriage.

My<sup>1</sup> health continuing miserable, I left Clifton, at my father's bidding, and much against my own will, for Switzerland, upon June 25, 1863. At that time, though I had enjoyed the valley of Chamonix and the glaciers of Mont Blanc, I did not care for Alpine scenery. The prospect of dragging my pain and weariness and aching eyes among a crowd of tourists through Swiss inns disgusted me.

In Cecil Bosanquet, brother of my Harrow friend Gustavus, I had a kind and amusing travelling companion. He knew I was ill, and must have seen that I had something weighing on my mind. But I did not confide to him my troubles. I had done so to no one, who was not brought into the affair by necessity.

This summer in Switzerland turned out so decisive for my future, that I shall dwell at length upon its incidents, drawing from the diary I still kept pretty regularly.

The 30th of June we spent at Strasburg, and I was determined to ascend the spire, after spending some hours reading Plato's 'Symposium' in the cathedral. It was necessary to

<sup>1</sup> Autobiography.

obtain a special permission from the Mayor. C. B. only got a short way above the platform; I persevered by an act of will, remembering Goethe. The guide preceding me, we rose through a spiral cage, very narrow, with open sides, down which we looked into the streets of the town. A false step might have sent one flying thither. This staircase narrowed at each of eight stages; and just at the top, in order to enter the crowning canopy, one had to stand in empty air upon the foliated apex of a pinnacle, and thence to take a spring, clutching at a bar above, and swinging up to a little stone platform. This gymnastic was trying to the head, especially on the return, when the whole descent, forested with spires, was seen naked beneath us. In the state of my health at that time, with the brain so troubled, this ascent of the Strasburg spire taxed nerve and energy too much. But I was glad to have made it at the expense of some headache.

Basel, Lucerne, Pilatus, nine days in the pine-woods of Seelisberg, six days at Engelberg, Rosenlauri, Interlaken, such was our route. These lines, written at Engelberg, describe my inner mood:

Ill and alone on alien shores,  
At noontide when the hot sun fires  
With blinding light the silver spires  
Of ice-tops, when the sick stream pours  
His everlasting torrent down  
The tumbled wreck of splintered stone,  
And black impending pines alone  
Assuage the mountain's horrid frown,  
'Tis sad to sit and dream of thee,  
Dear England, deep in greenery.

[And this letter to his sister describes his outer mood:]

'My <sup>1</sup> plan, if the weather permits, is to reach Meyringen by the Joch to-morrow. Should the weather prove bad, I shall go on at once to Interlaken from Meyringen. This doubt about the weather began yesterday, when we had a furious storm of rain and wind. I find that the chief pleasure which

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte. Engelberg, July 19, 1863.

I take in scenery is derived from what artists call "effects," and these are usually some peculiar aerial conditions of sunlight, mist, or cloud, under which the landscape is viewed. When the sun has reached a certain position with respect to our valley it pours a full flood of light into the gigantic chasm, and then every atom of craggy outline, every Alpine slope of grass, and all the interminable depths of pine forests which descend upon the pathway of a roaring stream are brought into intense relief. The whole valley looks like a golden cup, wonderfully embossed and chased within its concave, into which has been poured liquid light.

'Generally I avoid writing about mountains. Clear uniform sunlight fatigues me. It has a topographical utility, for it enables one to discriminate all the members of a range or network of valleys. But it makes nature dead. And for this reason I believe that a common English landscape contains all the elements of the sublime and beautiful. No Alpine views have touched my soul or elevated my feelings more than certain aerial effects of coming and departing storms which I have watched at sunset on Shotover. None have so thrilled me as the beauty of morning and of evening in the skies and vapoury distances of Clifton.

'I wish so much that there were some chance of your coming abroad with papa. When several of us are away together the unhomeliness of travelling is not so felt as it must be when one is alone, and has so many absent ones to think of. I believe that nothing will induce me to leave England again for Italy, when I once have got home. Please thank papa for his letter, which was like "sun in winter." I should have written to him to-day, but that I find my paper full.'

I<sup>1</sup> did much walking every day, however, and found real pleasure both in the Alpine scenery and glorious Alpine flowers. The thought of Hesperus and Hymenæus, combining with Goethe's 'Ueber allen Gipfeln ist Ruh,' haunted me at Engelberg, at Meyringen, at Interlaken. The evening star was strong and beautiful in that warm summer-time; and I

<sup>1</sup> Autobiography.

wrote 'prose sonatas' on the theme of Hesper for each of those places. I will transcribe the last of them.

*July 22.*—The day has been dull and sultry. Clouds have draped the mountains, and the sun has never shone, and in the air is coming thunder. An hour after sunset we strolled forth between two lakes, and leaving one behind us followed the stream which joins them. Shortly before it finds the lake of Thun there is a bridge on which we rested. Before us stretched the leaden plain of water, bounded by shadowy hills. The torrent rushed beneath, and all its tawny flood was livid with the yellow glare reflected from a chasm in the clouds. Between this sullen splendour and the calm grey hills there ran a narrow tongue of land on which no gleam was thrown. Dismal and black it lay in the midst of two waters, the turbid torrent and the distant lake. We stayed there long, watching the light upon the changeful stream, and growing almost in love with death. Surely this was the place to tempt a suicide. Cool plashing water, dark and impenetrable, surface-gilt with glare of sunset, dismal as decaying life, kept ever murmuring in the sultry air, saying : 'The land is desolate, the skies are dull and hot as a consuming furnace, but I am ever fresh and dewy and forgetful ; I am Lethe ; come to me, bring nothing of the world, and you shall find your rest.' So I pondered and made the torrent speak ; for in my heart were thoughts too deep for tears and woes too keen for utterance. Then far above our heads, above the cove of buried sunlight, broke the clouds, and Hesper swam forth, clear and hopeful, in his liquid spaces of aerial gold. Pure were the heavens around him, and their crystal chasms seemed cooler, happier than the leaden waves. As I gazed into their brightness it was as though I saw the choir of heaven's cathedral, wherein sat angels innumerable, harping on their harps and singing songs above the reach of words. Though I could not understand the burden of those songs, the spiritual melody went to my heart, and there translated its sweet message into mortal consolation. 'Seek not the tomb,' my heart responded, 'live your life as God shall give it. Trust in Him, and try to be of better cheer. After the dull day comes glory and peace.' The dissolving

saffron of the sunset glowed and faded to the tone of Mendelssohn's music, 'If with all your hearts ye truly seek Me.'

Next day we walked up to Mürren from Lauterbrunnen, where I was destined to abide, with one brief interval, until August 31, a memorable period for me. At Mürren I learned to love the Alps with a strong passion, which, though it has sobered in the course of years, still vibrates and endures. I also came to appreciate the Swiss people, and to admire the simple dignity and wholesome habits of the peasantry. My health revived daily. In spite of frequent drawbacks and persistent trouble in the brain, I grew stronger and lighter-hearted. The promise of Hesper at Interlaken seemed in part likely to be realised.

In those days there was only one little wooden inn at Mürren, the Silberborn, kept by Herr Sterchi and his family. Life was very primitive, few people staying in the house beside ourselves; troops of tourists coming up from Interlaken to lunch, and going noisily away again. The George de Bunsens were our companions for some time, and while they were still there an English family arrived. I can remember looking out of Cecil's window and spying their advent one bright afternoon in early August. It annoyed us to think that the hotel would now be fuller. 'They were Mr. Frederick North, M.P. for Hastings, and his two daughters' (so runs the Diary). 'Both the young ladies were devoted to sketching. The elder was blonde, tall, stout, good-humoured, and a little satirical. The second was dark and thin and slight, nervous and full of fun and intellectual acumen. The one seemed manager and mother, the other dreamer and thinker. Neither was remarkable for beauty, but the earnest vivacity of the younger grew upon me, and I could soon have fallen in love with her. Her name was Catherine. Mr. North is kind and easy-going. They seemed to have travelled in most parts of Europe.' Such is the entry in my precious priggish Diary about the woman whom I was destined to marry. I carried the thought of Catherine North, like a sleeping seed, in my mind through the next ten months, sought her out in London then, and did what will be afterwards related. The Norths stayed only a



week, I think, at Mürren, but that was time enough to form a tolerably just conception of them. Alpine inns are favourable places for hatching acquaintance and gaining insight into character.

[Mr. Bosanquet having to return home, Symonds went down to Zurich to join his future brother-in-law, T. H. Green. He was fully resolved to bring Green back with him to Mürren, and the reason peeps out in the following letter to his sister :]

‘I<sup>1</sup> found Green here last night. He wants us to try a little inn near Zurich, called Uetliberg, which is only 1,000 feet above the lake. I may try this place, but I confess that already I regret Mürren. The heat to me seems intense, maddening; but it is nothing to what it has been, and people laugh at me when I say I feel it. This shows how imprudent it would have been to have gone to Munich now. Two or three days even of this heat would have quite undone all the good of Switzerland. I should not wonder if we returned to Mürren. I cannot make Green go as far as the Æggishorn, which is strongly recommended; and certainly Mürren’s monotony and beauty, and great internal comfort, are better than semi-substitutes like Uetliberg. It is your birthday, and I must send you, what you know I do most heartily, my very best wishes. I wish I could also send you some souvenir from Switzerland, but things cut in wood I hate. Would you care to have one of the Bernese costumes? I thought of getting that for you. It is to me a most lovely dress.

‘At Mürren there was a young girl of the better class from Thun, who had come as a friend of the landlord for change of air, and who helped his people in the waiting on their guests. She always wore this dress when she dressed for Sundays or for dinner-time, and it suited her well; for she was a blonde, very slight and graceful, and very girlish. It amused me to find my ideal of Margaret realised in her better than in Gounod’s “Faust” or Retzsch’s etchings. In the evenings, after the servant girls had done their work, when the sky was clear

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte. Zurich, August 12, 1863.

and bright with stars, they used to sit upon the balcony and sing their country songs. It was pretty to hear them passing from high shrill shepherd ballads and mountain *Lieder*, to low soft chorales, then modulating all together a "Tra la la, tra la la," in liquid notes rising from their throats, or thrilling deep down in the chest, like the voice of a bird singing to itself at night. The landlord and his servants in these country inns treat travellers more as guests than anything else, and show them attentions, as if they were bound to do so by the laws of hospitality. I expect I had a very favourable instance of this at Mürren, for the simplicity and good manners of the people seemed perfect.'

Green<sup>1</sup> and I next day walked up to Uetliberg, and set ourselves down there in a little wooden tavern for a week. He had just come from Heidelberg, and was full of German philosophy, politics, and the higher poetry. I think he had it in his head then to translate a book of Baur's upon the first century of Christianity. We both worked during the day, sitting at wooden beer-tables under the thick beech trees, which, here and there, were cut into vistas over the illimitable landscape. I chose a gap from which the Bernese Oberland was visible, while I penned an essay on Shakespeare's Sonnets (it has not been published, but I possess the MS. still, and do not think amiss of it). I used to send many thoughts on airy wings to the Jungfrau, Eiger, Mönch, and humbler Breithorn. I could see them all distinctly when the vapour-veil allowed, and could mark exactly the spot of Mürren. Even the Schilt-horn allowed itself to be observed upon the flank of that vast snowy panorama. In the evenings we used to take long walks among the glow-worms, beneath the stars, watching the lamps of Zurich burn like earthly stars low down beside by the lake. It was a monotonous but pleasant life, and I learned much from Green. Here it was, I think, that he first showed me Goethe's proemium to 'Gott und Welt,' a poem which took deep hold upon me, and began to build my creed.

But a great longing came over me for Mürren. I remembered its unrivalled purity of air—those walks upon the

<sup>1</sup> Autobiography.

Schilthorn, in the Sefinenthal toward Trachsellaunin. I heard the aerial echoes of the Alpenhorn ascending from Lauterbrunnen, or floating from the Wengern Alp, and gaining melody upon the way. I longed for the immediate presence of the giant mountains with their glaciers. And the simple folk kept calling to me. And R—— E—— was the soul and centre of these things.

Green wanted us to go to Gais in Appenzell, but I overpersuaded him. I must return to Mürren, and he must come with me. We agreed then on these terms. He was to take the route by Rapperschwyl, Einsiedeln, Schwyz. I hurried straight to Thun. There I visited R——'s home, and made acquaintance with her mother, who seemed a little suspicious of me. She had probably some right to do so, for I doubt not that, in my simplicity, I let her infer that I was going back to Mürren for her daughter's sake.

I walked up to Mürren on August 10, in drenching rain. And it rained and snowed incessantly for three days when I arrived. R——, who knew that I had come again to see her, and who did not understand what all this meant, kept severely aloof, avoiding me on purpose.

'*August 22.*—Green came yesterday; and at nine this morning the sun shone out. We walked together in the deep snow, which lay thick upon those late summer flowers. They, poor things, revived immediately beneath the genial warmth, and lifted their pretty heads from wells of melting snow-wreaths. The whole world seemed to feel returning spring. Birds floated in dense squadrons overhead, whirling and wheeling on the edges of the clouds, which kept rising and dispersing in the eager air above our valley. Far away the mists rolled like sad thoughts that dissolve in tears.

'Later in the day we went to sit upon those rocks, the crests of precipices fifteen hundred feet in height, whence the eye plunges so giddily to the Lutschinen torrent, and where it is so pleasant to rest among the tufted stone-pinks (Stein-Nelken) in the cool of afternoon. "Descendunt montibus umbræ." The shadow of the Schilthorn spread itself above the hamlet. Jodelling goat-herds prepare to leave the upland

meadows. Peace spreads abroad while the row of dazzling giants, from the Eiger to the Blumlis Alp, still face the western sun, and shine until they too fade into amber, orange, rose.'

So the Diary goes on its way, minutely detailing all the tiny incidents of this slight idyll. I picked bunches of flowers fresh every morning for R——, climbing daily higher up the mountains as the summer flowers retreated, until at last there were few left but lilac crocuses and deep blue harebells. Innumerable sonnets too were written.

The last day I spent at Mürren was a Sunday. Herr Feuz, who then sold alpenstocks and little models of Swiss cottages, asked me to stand godfather to a little girl of his, just born. R—— and her friend were to be godmothers. Of course I acceded willingly to his request.

[And this is the account of the ceremony sent to his sister :]

'The <sup>1</sup> reason that I have not written to you lately is, that since Monday morning we have been travelling continuously by Winterthur, Schaffhausen, Constanz, Friedrichshafen, and Ulm to Munich. I tore myself away from Mürren on Monday, not without a spasm. Certainly I must in some sense be slow to take impressions, for last year I never could have believed it possible to grow so deeply attached to mountains, or to feel their spirit and their strength as I have done this summer. Everything seems cold and tame and lowering now: Munich and its art is bare and vulgar; I cannot return into my old self.

'On Sunday I stood godfather, as I told you I had promised, to the girl of one of the Mürren guides. My "gossips" were Mlle. R—— E——, daughter of a jeweller in Thun, and Mlle. Katrine, daughter of a retired innkeeper at Grindelwald. They had come to spend the summer at Mürren as the landlord's friends, and to help his wife. One of them is certainly the prettiest girl I have ever seen abroad, and the other is what the German Swiss would call "ein recht

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte. Munich, Sept. 3, 1863.

schönes deutsches Mädchen." This being the case, and I being an Englishman, you can fancy there was a little eagerness among the people of Lauterbrunnen to witness the baptismal ceremony.

'We three had breakfast together, and then the ladies got into a sledge, and I stood on the stand behind, and we were dragged like lightning down the steep descent to Lauterbrunnen, past the pine trees and the precipices, past the Staubbach and its hundred sister streams, chattering all the way in broken French, and screaming when the whirling of the sledge excited our alarm. At Lauterbrunnen we found the baby, and were entertained with wine by its father, and then walked solemnly to church adorned with bouquets. All the village stood ready to admire us, the Herr Pfarrer came out with his great white ruff and black bedgown, performed the ceremony after almost English fashion, and preached a sermon of which I understood but little. Then I took the young ladies to the hotel and gave them a luncheon, which chiefly consisted of veal cutlets and champagne. I was much pleased with the modesty and propriety of their behaviour. There was no affectation or self-consciousness about them. English girls of that condition would have giggled, blushed, and nudged one another, or have been half-frightened and speechless. But these maidens sat and ate their luncheon with perfect ease and grace, slightly deprecating the trouble I took about getting and serving them the meal, yet in nowise appearing out of their element. During the middle of the repast I walked Dr. B——. I noticed that his eyes were fixed on me with some curiosity. I suppose it was strange to see a young Englishman of one's acquaintance seated between two Swiss girls in their Bernese dress without a chaperon. Of course I talked to him, and told him of the christening, and he came out to see us off again to Mürren. When we reached the hotel we dined, Green and the father of the baby joining us. It pleased Green's democratic principles to be in such society; but I found it no less well-conducted and far more entertaining than that of my equals or superiors. More wit flowed, better things were said, and a finer politeness



shown, than I have generally met with at the dinner-table. We sat together, as is the Swiss custom, till about nine, talking, reading Goethe's ballads, playing at dominoes, and singing. Several of the other maids of the hotel were imported to help the singing, and they gave us many good mountain melodies which I wish I could remember.

'I thought the account of this day would amuse you more than a recital of everyday doings.'

[Switzerland, Mürren, and the idyll of R—— E—— left a deep impression upon Symonds's tastes and emotions; but they had not done much to restore his health in any permanent fashion. He travelled to Munich, whose 'essential tawdriness' he began to perceive, and thence to Nürnberg, Bamberg, Dresden, and Leipzig.]

'This<sup>1</sup> piece of paper is enormous, and my pen is very pinny. You may understand from this that I am travelling with only a handbag, having sent on my heavy luggage by express to London. If all be well, I hope to be at Clifton on Wednesday.

'We have amused ourselves here greatly. The Leipzig fair is going on, and the whole town swarms with Jews and German merchants. All the streets are laid out with booths, and the ground floors of the houses seem occupied by dealers from all parts of Europe. German, Italian, Polish, Russian, and English names are mixed up with texts in Hebrew; red-capped Hungarians and black-bonneted Jews walk about arm in arm. Our hotel is a great centre of commerce. Its ground floor is a cloth exchange. Jew dealers in cloth and linen occupy the first floor with shops. We live upon the third, where there is also an enormous hall, decorated for the occasion with arbours and grapes and river scenes, mountains, castles, moonlight, the German muse, and great tuns of wine, to represent Rhineland. Here at dinner and in the evening a band plays, and the commercial travellers lead a jolly life. Business and pleasure seem strangely mixed. I wonder where all the people live.'

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte. Sept. 27, 1863.



[From Leipzig Symonds went home, and was received full Fellow at Magdalen. But head and eyes still rendered any serious studies impossible. 'At Clifton,' he says in the Autobiography, 'I saw much of Henry Graham Dakyns. He had come to be an assistant-master at the recently-established college. He was a Rugby-Cambridge man, the friend of Arthur Sidgwick, whom I knew, and of Henry Sidgwick, whom I was destined to know. Of Graham I need only say here that his fervid temper of emotion, his unselfishness, his capacity for idealising things and people, the shrewdness of his intellectual sense, and the humour of his utterance (style almost of Jean Paul Richter), made their immediate impression on me.'

Symonds left England once more for Italy, journeying by the Riviera di Levante to Pisa, Florence, and eventually to Rome, which he reached in December. He had hoped that Mr. Arthur Sidgwick would be able to join him on his journey, and in a letter of invitation, dated October 9th, he writes: 'I have to-day a desire to embrace at once all that is beautiful and deeply thought in Art, Philosophy, and Nature. . . . Thus I am caught in a whirl, and I do nothing but feel intensely a various and changing life.'

From Turin, Florence, and Rome he wrote these three letters to Mr. Dakyns, in which he describes his mental and physical state:]

'When<sup>1</sup> Milton spoke about false poets drawing their inspiration from "Dame Memory and her seven daughters," though he meant Mnemosyne and the Muses, his contempt arose from a lurking side glance at the *Sehnsucht* which clings to them. *Sehnsucht* is the passion which builds an ideal in the future, or the world of possibilities out of old and transfigured recollections. This is all I can now tell you about her, though at other times I could say much more.

'I have had a long and stupid journey. My eyes got worse when I was at Oxford, owing probably to our habit of sitting round a blazing fire after dinner; they were again weakened

<sup>1</sup> To H. G. Dakyns. Turin, November 3, 1863.

by a stormy passage, and when I got to Paris I could hardly see. Of course I can neither read nor look out of the window when I am in the train, nor can I read or write during the evenings at hotels, so you may fancy how much time I have for reflection. This, since I find abstract reasoning fatiguing and even impossible at most times, I consecrate to Dame Memory, not after the projectile fashion of *Sehnsucht*, but in a mildly retrospective mood. To these "sessions of sweet silent thought" rise many forms, now divinised, and even past pain and loss and terror assume a tragic beauty, while the pleasures of the years gone by seem unimaginable. Life flies before me like a symphony, and I choose to alter the old adage thus: "Præsens, imperfectum; plusquam perfectum, perfectum; futurum, infinitivum et optativum." When tired of these I revolve verses which I know by heart. One great source of amusement I have lately discovered, and that consists in dwelling upon some historical scene and defining it to my own imagination. From Paris to Macon I thought incessantly of a passage in Suetonius descriptive of (I think) Caligula's wakefulness. It begins, "Incitabatur insomnio maxime." The result was that, having fully realised his position, I tried to write verses about it. I liked them at the time, but when I put them on paper they were all monotonous and feeble. I cannot get beyond the sensuous idea.'

'I' am ashamed to leave Florence without writing to you, though how I am to keep all my epistolary engagements I do not know. Your letter came to me some seventeen days ago, as I was setting off one intensely cold morning for Vallombrosa. I read it there among the brooks strewn with their yellow chestnut leaves, and it made the place more vivid by contrast with the scenes which it recalled to memory. Since then I have seen, grown, and suffered much. I have seen pictures enough to content my artistic yearnings. I have grown in knowledge of my insufficiency and in resolves—a barren growth. I have suffered from terrible physical and mental weakness. An oppression, under which I hope you may never groan, a darkness into which no angel can descend,

<sup>1</sup> To H. G. Dakyns. Florence, December 9, 1863.

has weighed me to the earth. And neuralgia has gnawed me until I am very feeble. "Quousque tandem?" is all I cry—in vain. Here I am burdened, and in England I have no rest. I do not know what will become of me. Would that you and others of my friends had known me years ago, when I was fresh and young and capable of being and doing good. I have seen much of Congreve here. Rutson and I take long walks with him and make him discourse. You know, of course, whom I mean—the Positivist priest in London. This is an inadequate description of the man, but it denotes him. He is divided from Littré and Mill and Lewes, and others whom the world call Comtists, by his priesthood. They take the scientific side of Comte, regarding the religious as a senile dream. He hinges his theory of the future upon the new faith, that shall reorganise society. I never saw a man more confident in his own opinions under worse auspices. When I asked him how far distant he thought the reign of Positive principles might be, he answered, "To the unbelieving, I should place it at the expiration of three or four centuries; for myself, I believe that our power will be established in hardly more than the same number of generations." Everything according to his notions points to the silent adoption of Positive principles and the irresistible march of its unerring truth. So far he agrees with the enemies in his own camp. But he goes beyond and says: "Men need religion—the health of Europe is decaying because there is no religion; religion is necessary to bind society together. Why are our nerves weak, our bodies feeble, our writings aimless, our whole constitutions brittle? Because the moral organisation of religious faith has been dissolved, no discipline exists; each man thinks as he chooses, many think nothing, others are broken by a thousand doubts, literature expands into useless but exciting channels, stimulus without an aim keeps up continual irritation—in short, there is no centre or circumference to our society. In politics the State is becoming disintegrated to the very individual. And all this rottenness ensues from the want of a moral bond. If I thought that Christianity could supply this bond I would be a Christian, though I should not believe the creed. But it

cannot—it never did ; the religious bond of Europe has always been more polytheistic than Christian ; and now we need something stronger.” I ask, does he think that Positivism can supply to the affective parts of man an interest sufficient to make each individual quiet in his sphere, confident of the future, and vigorous for labour ? “ Certainly,” he answers ; “ men will relinquish the immoral and degraded yearning after personal immortality ; science will teach them not to seek for first causes like God.” Humanity they will reorganise as their great mother, as that without which they are nothing, to which owing everything they are bound to render every service, as the source of strength, the seat of aspirations, and the object of prayer. He allows that humanity can have no consciousness, and when I define prayer as implying the communion of two conscious beings he glides away and talks of contemplation. I have asked for bread, and he has given me a stone. Why not deny me bread and say, “ I have none : science has petrified my store ” ? I should be more content. But to offer me religion, prayer, a Church, a liturgy, a stool to kneel on, a pulpit to hear sermons from, and then to bid me fix my hopes upon a *summum genus* which I help to make—it is too absurd. If I ever become a Positivist, it will be of the Mill kind.

‘ In a week or two the cathedral at Bristol will echo to the sound of Christmas anthems, and the most sacred, mythical, and undogmatic mystery of Christian faith will be celebrated. I love that pagan season of rejoicings, with its multitudinous visions of bright-armed and clear-throated cherubim in the still air. Yet it will come cheerless to me in the strangers’ land, for the spirit has departed, and the charm that lingers is one of old association not to be unlinked from place. Besides, our paganism in England is different from the rites of Rome imperial, more suited in its dark, warm, mystic passion to the children of knights who sought the Holy Grail, than the thuribles and pontiffs of the Vatican.

‘ I wish I could be home again at Christmas, free from Congreve, and the Sistine Chapel, with a child’s belief in angels. How they hurried in the “ Gloria in Excelsis,” after

the low symphony, until the whole church rustled with their swift-descending squadrons.

‘Good-night. Write to Rome, and tell me how you passed Christmas.’

‘I<sup>1</sup> shall be leaving Rome without writing to you unless I write soon. You cannot tell how hard I find it to say anything to any one from abroad ; although I feel as if I ought to be able to suit your tastes, with some subject of interest in Rome, I cannot eliminate one from this tangled skein of rich and rare experience that I have enjoyed. If I have ever wished for you, and you must believe that my pleasure would have at most times been increased by the presence of one so sympathetic and so apt to feel the beauty and the glory of the world, it has been in the Sculpture-galleries of the Vatican and the Capitol, and upon the sea of the Campagna. The one is full of beauty, more definite and musical and ever new than anything that I have dreamed ; the other breathes a pantheistic inspiration so lovely and indistinct, and yet so omnipresent in its changeful tunes and half-heard melodies, that I learned to gain a new insight into old mythologies and modern dreams of nature’s life. This language is so rhapsodical that you can make nothing of it ; but if you were here I would defy you to put your feelings for the Campagna into any words.’

From <sup>2</sup> Rome Stephens [who had joined him after Mr. Rutson went home] and I moved down to Naples and Sorrento. Feb. 11, back to Rome. Feb. 14, by post to Narni, Todi, Perugia, and Assisi. Feb. 15, by Città di Pieve and Chiusi to Leghorn. Home by Genoa, Marseilles, and Paris.

I have a diary of this Italian journey ; but the best part of my impressions was conveyed in a long series of letters to my father and sister. He wished to arrange and publish them. But the plan, wisely, I think, fell through ; and when I found them, after his death, I burned the whole bundle.

Being unable to use my eyes for study, I read very little and learned no Italian. On the other hand, I was able to

<sup>1</sup> To H. G. Dakyns. 107 Corso, Rome, Jan. 23, 1864.

<sup>2</sup> Autobiography.



walk as much as I liked, and could see everything which did not involve mental strain. Accordingly, with indefatigable curiosity, I drank in buildings, statues, pictures, nature—the whole of the wonderful Italian past presented in its monuments and landscape. I learned a great deal undoubtedly, which proved of use to me in after years. And the life I led was simple, reserved, free from emotional disturbances.

[The following passage from the Diary shows how Symonds felt at Castellamare:]

*February 1, 1864.*—The<sup>1</sup> people are not unworthy of this land. They live a joyous life upon the slopes, between wind-sheltering mountains and the land-locked sea. They are different from the Neapolitans, more beautiful and lightly built, retaining as it were some old Greek loveliness of shape and dignity of carriage. Girls carrying pitchers on their heads have the neck and bust of a statue, and the young men look like athletes with deep ardent eyes. A peasant boy, like Juvenal's servant, waited on us while we dined in the old rustic fashion, and ate our dessert of dried figs, and plums, and grapes, preserved in their own leaves, the produce of the country. We found him playing bowls with oranges; and when our meal was finished he brought musicians, with violins and pipes of a true rural kind. They played us *Volkslieder*, love songs and fishing choruses. This Neapolitan music has a peculiar richness of melody, depending on long lingering cadences, and notes sustained until their passion breaks into a shower of swift descending sound. The air is not elaborate or subtly modulated, but simple, off-repeated, and full of yearning beauty. When one remembers that Handel borrowed his Pastoral Symphony and the melody of 'He shall feed His flock,' from the shepherds of the Southern Apennines, one understands how richly laden with pathetic loveliness these songs can be. One especially pleased me. Neapolitan girls sing it to their lovers, and its words begin, 'Ti voglio ben

<sup>1</sup> Diary.



assai.' With youth, health, ignorance, and beauty this land would be perfection. Here I could bask in sunshine,

'Till books, and schools, and courts, and honours seem  
The far-off echo of a sickly dream.'

Truly, they now sound leagues away on alien shores. The world is wide, wide, wide; and what we struggle for, ten thousand happy souls in one fair bay have never dreamed of. I would give much to live, and love, and pass my life within the sound of these unvarying waves, and in the gorgeous interchange of light and gloom which dwells for ever on the furrowed hills. I know not why, but in Italy I feel a continual unsatisfied desire, and, therefore, ignorance must be an element of happiness. Shelley calls the great god Pan 'a want,' and all this beauty seems to me the sense of what can never fully be our own. It rolls without us, and we include it not; it lives its life, and we intrude upon it for a moment: it is serene and full of peace; we hurry over it, and question it and get no answer, and then we die, and still it is the same: it sounds to us like 'the echo of an antenatal dream,' and when we strive to arrest its fleeting loveliness, it disappears far off on wings that follow on the paths of sleep. This love of nature is modern; or, perchance, the ancients felt it deeper than ourselves, and hid beneath their moderate lines—

'Hic ver perpetuum atque alienis mensibus ætas,'

a fount of passion drawn from blood-red suns above sapphire seas, from gorgeous hues and heavy summer scents, from 'swooning sounds' upon the pathless hills, and springtide chantings of innumerable choirs. Ruskin's paint-box of delirious words, my 'orchestra of salt-box, tongs and bones,' speak nothing; even Shelley's rainbow woof of aerial images are unintelligible till we find ourselves within the sphere of inspiration. Silence and rest and voiceless enjoyment are the soul of Art upon these shores; here Nature lives her life, and each man must penetrate it for himself; she has no high priest, but is unto herself both oracle and Pythia, and even

music can do no more than reproduce the passion which her pulses stir.

[But Symonds was not well, mentally or physically; nor, indeed, was his travelling companion, Mr. Stephens. He writes as follows about this journey:]

How<sup>1</sup> I dragged my illness and my ennui through that wonderful world appears from some stanzas written at Sorrento on February 5. They are printed in 'New and Old,' under the title 'Looking Back.' It is noticeable that this poem, undoubtedly the spontaneous utterance of a prevalent mood, dwells upon Clifton, wholly omitting any mention of the Alps [or of Italy]. One of the most sublime and psychologically pregnant passages in the great Lucretian epic is the description of ennui:

' Ut nunc plerumque videmus  
Quid sibi quisque velit nescire et quærere semper  
Commutare locum quasi onus deponere possit. . . .  
Hoc se quisque modo fugit (at quem scilicet, ut fit,  
Effugere haud potis est, ingratis hæret), et odit  
Propterea, morbi quia causam non tenet æger.'

Lucretius prescribes the study of the laws of Nature as a cure for this disease of the soul. 'Live in the eternal thoughts and things,' he tells us. And in some way or other this is the right way, the only way, to escape.

I was deeply wounded in heart, brain and nerves; and yet I was so young. On February 5, 1864, I reckoned just twenty-three years and four months. And like Alfred de Musset, in his 'Nuit de Décembre,' I could speak of my wanderings thus:

' Partout où, sous les vastes cieux,  
J'ai lassé mon cœur et mes yeux,  
Saignant d'une éternelle plaie;  
Partout où le boiteux Ennui,  
Traînant ma fatigue après lui,  
M'a promené sur une claie.'

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<sup>1</sup> Autobiography.

The physical illness—that obscure failure of nerve-force, which probably caused a sub-acute and chronic congestion of small blood-vessels in the brain, the eyes, the stomach perhaps, and other organs—was the first source of this ennui. But there was another and deeper source behind it, and of which, in fact, it was but the corporeal symptom. I had not recovered from the long anxiety caused by ——’s treacherous attack. Then excessive headwork, superfluous agitation concerning religion and metaphysics—the necessary labour of an ambitious lad at college, and the unwholesome malady of thought engendered by a period of *Sturm und Drang* in England—depressed vitality, and blent the problems of theology with ethical and personal difficulties.

Such, I think, were the constituent factors of my ennui. It grew daily more and more oppressive. As the clouds had rolled away in the congenial atmosphere of Mürren, so now in the great cities of Italy they gathered again. I returned to England weaker than I had left it.

[On his return from abroad Symonds settled in London. He rented rooms on the first floor at No. 7 Half Moon Street, his friend Mr. Rutson living in the same house. His health was still wretched, and he was unable either to do much work, or to enjoy much society, in what he calls ‘this great grinding world of London.’ Of his enforced leisure he writes to his sister :]

‘It<sup>1</sup> is a great pity that children are not always taught to play some instrument. I should find music a great resource now, when the periods of unemployed solitude are much more frequent and more trying—owing to the weakness of my eyes and head—than I had reckoned on. I have it seriously in my mind to take lessons on the piano, simply as a means of passing hours which must be devoted to reflection when the book has been laid down. The æsthetical element is sorely neglected in all education, but its loss is felt most by those whose temperament renders them sensitive to art, without enabling

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte. 7 Half Moon Street, March 31, 1864.

them to originate anything. I have felt very lonely, as you may believe, plunged into this absolute solitude of London, and capable of so little mental exertion during the day, and of no continuous occupation in the evening, after the varied and refreshing interests and pleasures of Clifton. I sometimes dread, when I am at home, that a time may come when I shall have to call in vain for kindness such as is there lavished on me, and find myself alone. Such desolation one knows in nightmares, but I fancy that it surrounds many men whose hearts are tender, and need love, but who have none to love them. Therefore I desire to take my present happier case as a man should take any great gift of God, which comes to him and makes him live. He must not refuse it, or even question it; but if it ceases, he must not repine, or curse his fate and waken to despair. It is very hard to bear both blindness and weakness of brain in solitude, for thought and reading are rendered equally injurious to the chance of future strength. Indeed, when a man has accustomed himself to exclusively intellectual pursuits, and his head and eyes fail him, he becomes very dependent on the easy unexciting and unexhausting society of home.

‘But I am not going to croak, for I do not feel altogether in a croaking humour. I have only been reckoning up the difficulties of my position, which I consider to be grave, and, therefore, all the more honourable to their conqueror if he can conquer them. Farther acquaintance with London life will teach me how to employ my evenings better; though theatres and lecture rooms, from their great heat as well as glare, are bad for head and eyes to an extent that will oblige me to use them very moderately.

‘Mr. Fox is very attentive. He plays the part of valet with the most punctilious, wearisomely punctilious, care. It is impossible to have a wrinkle in one’s clothes, or a book or brush out of place about one’s rooms.’

[Symonds, though suffering, writes to his friend Mr. Stephens: ‘But I am not daunted, and I look on this kind of life as salutary in many ways, especially as a corrective of

sybaritic habits, and also as a prelude to what must almost inevitably be the isolation of many years in the life of all men.' He employed such respite as his ill-health allowed him in writing articles for the 'Saturday Review'; in setting out his thoughts upon theology in the form of a Commentary to Goethe's 'Gott und Welt,' and reading the minor Elizabethan dramatists. He read and thought at random in the Club; rode in the Park; rowed on the Serpentine; went sculling up the river with a waterman of Surbiton; when possible accepted invitations to dinner parties and balls. But the letter just cited shows that a dread of solitude—of a solitude that would certainly increase with age—was leading him toward the thought of marriage. Music was still a solace to him, but as this summer wore on, London became intolerable.]

'What<sup>1</sup> have I been about all this long time when I have seemed to forget you? Do not ask me, but do not think I have forgotten you. In this stifling city of bricks and dust and iron, I have often seen you knee-deep in the blue-bells and anemones of Leigh Woods, under the tender screen of fresh green beech and hazel leaves, or in the solemn shadows of the rocks at night, looking across to those deep cloven dells. Longing, so intense that it supplies the sight it craves for, has filled me for the valleys of Switzerland and the sweet, strange, languid spirit of Clifton. If I were a painter I would draw that wild mysterious Syren—with her veils of moonlight vapour, the flowers and leaves and streams about her feet, the towers on her dusky hair, the passionate heaving of her hidden breast, the languor of her smile, the sweet intoxication of her kisses, and those eyes which I have never seen, but felt, prayed to, and questioned restlessly from childhood. Or if I were a poet, the same should live in song. Men should know how, in the still green gardens of that lady, they might meet with love, or melancholy more intense than love, dreams subtle and distinct of joys impossible, embroidered on the woof of common life. I would tell them, too, how universal Pan in days gone by had wooed her for her beauty, leaving in her lap the gift of

<sup>1</sup> To H. G. Dakyns. London, May 19, 1864.

charm invisible ; of whispers half heard in the summer trees, and shapes half seen at noontide in the shadows ; how Ocean from his distant caves has filled her ear with indescribable sea sounds, and in the midst of her primeval woods shed mystery. Nor would I fail to interweave the many songs which she has sung to me—the song of Linus, whom the reapers loved, and whom they sent at sundown to the well, but he returned not, and they sought him all a summer night with cries of, “ Ah, for Linus ” ; the song of Hymenæus whom, a shepherd boy on Ceta, the star Hesper loved, and drew him up the heights and rapt him from the eyes of mortals in immortal joy ; the song of young Endymion, of Hylas, and of Cyparissus ; the woodland tales of Ida, where C  none loved, and Aphrodite met the sire of mighty Rome. I, too, would tell of her deceitful moods, of the frowns and scourges which she has in store for those who worship her, and of her pitiful relentings when she goes abroad upon the sobbing winds and beats against the window panes, entreating to be pardoned and to be loved once more. Guileful spirit, beautiful and wicked, who has raised thy veil and seen thee as thou art ? Who knows thee in the cold, dark night, when moon and stars are hidden, when no tempests are awake, when all is stern ? Who has found thee in the open light of common day, or trodden unguiled among thy labyrinths ? Then he may seek but he will find thee not, for thou dost dwell in the sunseting and sunrise, in luxurious summer evenings and in latticed shadows of soft, silken leaves, spurning the real and palpable and hard and open places of the world.

‘ I do not know why I have run on like this. I often think or dream aloud on paper, and you must take this for a reverie. I do not know what to write to you, for I have nothing to tell. My life has been monotonous, and I have suffered as usual from weakness of eyes and head.’

‘ Thank <sup>1</sup> you, my dearest Charlotte, for your kind and affectionate letter. The pain which I have been suffering during the last few days, the solitude in which I have lived, and the multitudes of thoughts and feelings which have swept

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte. London, June 20, 1864.



through my mind, have left me very weak and very sensitive to all kind influences. I am better now, and able to get about a little.

‘It makes me very sad to think I am to see so little of papa again this summer, and that my health will not admit of my coming to Clifton—which I have dreamed of, as most dear and beautiful of all fair places, among the mountains of Switzerland and the ruins of Rome. You offer me kind consolation in saying that ill health improves and refines the mind. But I do not feel it easy to look upon it as a blessing. It does not seem to me far other in the intellectual world than sin is in the moral—at least when it suspends activity so much as in my case. It is only a true and earnest Christian, one who lives for another world and believes in a life where nothing is that is not perfect, who can be truly resigned under the weakening of his physical and mental faculties.’

‘London<sup>1</sup> is like a brick oven seven times heated. The pavements and the walls seem to hold caloric funded, day by day increasing, radiating all the night, but not exhausted when the sun gets up to fire them afresh. Everyone is going away. The streets are comparatively thin of grand carriages. Operas are being played at lower prices. The Ministerial fish-dinner comes on soon. And of all things there is a beginning of the end. It is rather dull. But I have come to like London under almost every aspect. It is the only place where constant relief from the agitations of one’s own self may be found by looking at other people; because, in London, life never stops by day or night, and whenever you choose to go forth and roam about, you find people restless and energetically living in some fashion. A little while ago I had a very sleepless night, and it burdened me to hear all through the darkness, and through the still, cold approaches of the dawn, and through the hot beginnings of the day, one ceaseless flood of sound, varying in intensity and kind, but never resting. It burdened me. But if I had been well and living strongly, it would have stimulated me with a sense of sympathy. How strangely different is this cast of circumstances from that which

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte. London, July 17, 1864.

environs one in some place like Mürren. There nothing is heard but the sounds of innumerable waterfalls and never-ceasing winds. The air is not less full of murmurs, but not one recalls humanity. Here every sound attaches itself to some human being. In the one place God somehow seems close to one. In the other He is far removed, and seen but dimly through the mass of men obscuring Him. Yet the Self remains essentially the same.

‘I am quite alone, more alone, with the past and present to myself, than perhaps I ever was. And writing to you is like writing to another world. I seem to hear my own voice falling thin and dry and hollow on your ear, as it were over the waste of a great water.’

The <sup>1</sup> turbid amalgam of my life had reached a point at which some sort of crystallisation was inevitable. It only wanted a wire of resistance and support to be thrust into it.

[The thought of Mürren recalled, ‘as by inspiration,’ the memory of that English family whose acquaintance he had made there on the ledge above Lauterbrunnen, among Alpine flowers, and face to face with the Jungfrau. With characteristic impetuosity Symonds called on Mr. North, pursued the acquaintance in London, asked and obtained leave to follow the family to Pontresina in August, proposed and was accepted on Sunday afternoon, August 14th; on the 16th exchanged betrothal rings with Catherine North on the top of Piz Languard, accompanied the Norths to Venice in September, and was married at St. Clement’s Church, Hastings, on November 10th.]

<sup>1</sup> Autobiography.

## CHAPTER VII

## MANHOOD. DRAWN TOWARDS LITERATURE

13 Albion Street, London—Studies law—Question of a career—Visit to Clifton—Conversations with Woolner—On Morality in Art—Depression—47 Norfolk Square, London—First symptoms of pulmonary disease—Birth of a daughter—Determination towards literature—Consults Jowett—His advice—A conversation with Jowett—Visit to Clifton—Dr. Symonds declares the lungs to be affected—On Shakespeare's Sonnets—His study of Clough—The Handel Festival—Sent abroad by his father—Regrets for Clifton—Letters from the Riviera—Monte Carlo—On Elizabethan freedom and licence—Leaves the Riviera for Tuscany and Ravenna—Returns by the Lakes to Macugnaga—On landscape painting—Over the St. Bernard to Switzerland—Mürren revisited—Symonds takes stock of himself—Returns home.

[AFTER a few months the Symondses took lodgings at 13 Albion Street, because it was quiet and near the park. Symonds ostensibly intended to follow the law, but in reality he was being steadily drawn towards literature. He writes to his sister:]

'I<sup>1</sup> have not written to you once since I left Clifton, but you have written to me, and I feel guilty. Nor can I plead great stress of work, for in no way have I been occupied. Our time passes pleasantly when we are alone in the evenings. If you were all here, I mean you and papa and auntie, and if I could quell those questions which continually rise in my mind about life, I think I should be wholly happy. Women do not, need not, pose themselves with problems about their own existence, but a man must do it, unless he has a fixed impulse in one definite direction, or an external force, compelling him to take an inevitable line. I do not think, looking back upon the past, that I half knew—I know I never half thanked you

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte. 13 Albion Street, March 21, 1865.

for—the help you gave me in music. I ought to have been taught it, for I believe I have more natural taste for that than for any other of the arts, and I should have taken the same line that you do, of clear and intelligent and various interpretation.’

‘You<sup>1</sup> may see by this that I am in lawyer’s chambers, but how much law I am doing I will not reveal to you. It is very little. My wife is well. I am well. The quarter of a sheet concerning our doings shall be given you. We breakfast at nine, and I begin to write as soon afterwards as possible. If I do not go down to these chambers, the writing continues till one. It is about the Dramatists at present, and will be for a long while. After lunch we pay visits and see pictures. In the evening, if there is no party to go to, no play to see, no music to hear, we read aloud. We have read many books, the best being Lewes’s “Goethe,” “Romola,” Villari’s “Savonarola,” and now we are reading Grimm’s “Life of M. Angelo.” I want to keep my mind on that period of European history. Gaps are filled up by Dante, Heine’s Songs, and the learning of some poems of Goethe. With all this law does not agree. I do not know whether it will ever suit me. At present my coach cannot give me work. I am in a state of suspense about law and literature. Am I to serve God or Mammon? Am I to study and write or to pursue this profession? Am I to be poor with letters, or to run the chance of being rich with law? Then, again, am I justified in assuming [myself] to be one of the priesthood of art? Am I a selected soul? If I give myself to literature, and find myself inadequate, can I be content with a fastidious silence? Is it my fate to be a bluebottle fly buzzing in the courts, or a voiceless ephemera upon the banks of an unfrequented river? I have not faith, which is the oxygen of life, and lets one breathe in spaces howsoever cramped. You see I am settling the question of life; and if you can give me any definite ideas on these vague problems, thanks to you. It is a terrible and a consuming problem. I feel so weak, so unable to do anything, or to take hold of any subject. In the room with me at this

<sup>1</sup> To H. G. Dakyns. 5 Paper Buildings, Temple, March 23, 1865.

moment are five men, all provided with clear brains for business, all talking slang, and all wondering what strange incapable animal I am who have thus come among them. They can move stones with their little finger which my whole strength will not stir. But is it likely that they could touch the subjects which thrill my soul? Would there were some high court of equity to decide our vocations. It seems as if, till this moment, I had lived apart and now am launched among men. I have talked too long about a matter which, after all, is and must be my own, to be decided by myself. It is a hard world, my dear Dakyns, but a beautiful world if one could feel oneself at liberty to enjoy it.'

[In the autumn of this year the Symonds were at Clifton Hill House, on a visit.]

*August 7, 1865.*<sup>1</sup>—To-day has been splendid. I worked at Lyly all the morning, and in the afternoon went with C. and Woolner to walk in Leigh Woods. They are just as beautiful as when I used to roam there years ago. The lights fall still as golden on those grey rocks streaked with red, on the ivy and the trees, the ferns and heather, and the bright enchanter's nightshade. Not a point is different except myself. This beauty sinks into my soul now as then; but it does not stir me so painfully and profoundly. I do not feel the hunger which I had; nor am I conscious of the same power, the same unlimited hopes, the same expectations solemn from their vagueness.

C. has in a great measure effected this change. What is good in it I owe to her influence, and to the happiness which her love has brought me. She has raised my moral nature and calmed my intellectual irritability. But there is also a change for the worse. This is simply attributable to my long-continued physical weakness. No one who has not suffered in the same way can adequately feel how great is the sapping, corroding power of my debility. Eyes for more than two years useless. Brain for more than two years nearly paralysed—never acutely tortured, but failing under the least strain and

<sup>1</sup> Diary.

vibrating to the least excitement. To feel as little as possible, to think and work as slightly as I could, to avoid strong enjoyments when they rarely offered themselves, has been my aim. I have done nothing in this period by a steady effort. Everything has come by fits and starts of energy, febrile at the moment, and prostrating me for days when they are over. Sometimes for weeks together I have not seen a ray of sunlight. At Florence, at Rome, in London, at Clifton, I have risen with the horror of these nights, have walked through the day beneath the burden of dull aching nerves, and have gone to bed in hopelessness, dry with despair and longing for death. Suddenly, in the midst of this despair, a ray of my old capacity for happiness has burst upon me. For a few hours my heart has beat, my senses have received impressions, my brain has coined from them vigorous ideas. But vengeance follows after this rejoicing. Crack go nerves and brain, and thought and sense and fancy die. The leaden atmosphere of despair closes around me, and I see no hope. Many are the men, no doubt, who have suffered as I have suffered. Last summer I spent six days in London, in Half-Moon Street. I had just [been subjected to treatment] which gave great pain, and made me very weak. If it succeeded it was to do wonders. In the midst of my weakness I hoped. I sat upon one chair with my legs upon another. I could not read. I could not bear the light upon my eyes. I was too desolate and broken to see friends. I scarcely slept, and heard all night London roar, with the canopy of flame in the hot sky above those reeking thoroughfares. At three or four day broke. In the evening I sat idle, and it was dark. All the while I hoped. This cure shall do wonders.

But the old evil broke out again. One night I woke. A clock struck two—it was the Victoria clock at Westminster. I bit the bedclothes, and bared myself upon the bed in anguish; and at last I sobbed. It was all over with me. I took up next morning the old cross.

How long is it since I last kept a connected diary? Three years. When that blow came upon me in the spring of 1863, I said, I will write no more in this book. And I did write no



more. My happiness went first. Then my brain refused to work. Then my eyes were blinded. I went to Switzerland. How much of beauty I learned there. And at Mürren I saw C. Then followed my summer in London, and those days of mental, moral, physical annihilation. At the end of them I arose and found C. at Pontresina. On the 10th of last November we were married; and now we live together in our house, both happy, and she will ere long give me a child.

God give me strength. Thou knowest how I love her, Thou only; and Thou knowest how she has made me happy. But this is not all. Give me strength. Cast me not utterly away as a weed. Have I not longed and yearned and striven in my soul to see Thee, and to have power over what is beautiful?

Why do I say 'Lord, Lord,' and do not? Here is my essential weakness. I wish and cannot will. I feel intensely, I perceive quickly, sympathise with all I see, or hear, or read. To emulate things nobler than myself is my desire. But I cannot get beyond—create, originate, win heaven by prayers and faith, have trust in God, and concentrate myself upon an end of action. Scepticism is my spirit. In my sorest needs I have had no actual faith, and have said to destruction, 'Thou art my sister.' To the skirts of human love I have clung, and I cling blindly. But all else is chaos—a mountain chasm filled with tumbling mists; and whether there be Alps, with flowers and streams below, and snows above, with stars or sunlight in the sky, I do not see. The mists sway hither and thither, showing me now a crag and now a pine—nothing else.

Others see, and rest, and do. But I am broken, bootless, out of tune.

Sinews, strong nerves, strong eyes, are needful for action. I have none of these; and besides, I have a weakness ever present. It eats my life away. . . . Truly this is no fable.

I want faith. 'Je suis venu trop tard dans un monde trop vieux.' . . .

Yet I have ambition. Truly I wish and will not. Men like Woolner and my father make me blush. They will, they do, they enjoy. They have a work in life. They have brains

clear and strong, nerves equable and calm, eyes keen and full of power. They have faith in God and in the world.

What is left for me to do? As long as C. lives and loves me, my home must be happy. There I am fully blest. But in this home I shall languish if I do not work. And for what work am I fitted? Jowett said, some time ago, for law or literature. I say, after some months' trial, not for law. And for literature, with these eyes and brain? What can I do? What learn? How teach? How acquire materials? How think? How write calmly, equably, judiciously, vigorously, eloquently for years, until a mighty work stands up to say, 'This man has lived. Take notice, men, this man had nerves unstrung, bleared eyes, a faltering gait, a stammering tongue, and yet he added day by day labour to labour, and achieved his end!' Shall it, can it, be?

Is this possible? C. will help me. She is noble, loving, true. But will I help myself? Will this body bear me up—this Will last out?

To study, acquire facts, gain style, lose the faults of youth, form a standard of taste, throw off dependence on authority, learn to be sincere, try to see clearly, refuse to speak before I feel, grow logical, must be my aim.

I have no faith, not even in myself; and the last three years have destroyed all sanguine expectations, all illusions, but they have not brought me deadness or content.

*August 9.*—Woolner is doing a bust of my father. He is a little man of great vigour—very clear in his perceptions and opinions, strong-willed, determined, moral, finely fibred. I like the outspoken sense of his remarks. He makes mistakes of criticism, and is very bumptious. I, for instance, hear him now through an open door: 'Carlyle says the language of my poem is quite perfect . . . that's because it is so simple, and has nothing strained; idiomatic, just as one talks.' This simplicity of self-satisfaction is amusing. He carries it so far that one forgets it. I particularly admire his fresh, strong expressions of dislike and approbation. He knows a great many remarkable men. Tennyson is a great friend of his, and so is Browning. Browning tells him that he writes straight

down, and never looks again at what he writes. Tennyson composes in his head, and never writes down until he is about to publish. Tennyson has composed as much as he has ever published and lost it again, owing to this habit. In particular, he once wrote a Lancelot, and now only a few lines or words come back upon his memory. Tennyson says form is immortal, instancing the short poems of Catullus. Browning hopes to live by force of thought, and is careless about form. Tennyson, Palgrave, and Woolner went to Tintagel. The poet there conceived four idylls about men, answering to his four idylls about women. Jowett put them out of his head by wondering whether the subjects could be properly treated. Tennyson makes mistakes about the poets he admires. He once wrote to Bailey, and said he was a wren singing in a hedge, while the author of 'Festus' was an eagle soaring above him. Woolner does not respect persons, but has a masculine respect for character, and likes people to keep to their trade and not to meddle. He has a profound contempt for Jowett's meddling criticism.

*August 10.*—Woolner told me last night that he is thirty-nine, Conington's age. At fourteen he began to dream of poetry as the best thing in life, and he still likes it better, and would rather cultivate it than any other art. His very correct eye led him to adopt sculpture as the easiest means of getting a livelihood. He cannot endure town life; looks forward to spending his days among trees, with a bit of water near him, in the country, designing poems in form. He read us out, in a coarse, deep, energetic voice, parts of 'My B. L.'

We had a pleasant afternoon in Leigh Woods, sitting on the point from which the bridge, the observatory, and Clifton Downs are seen. I read C. pieces from the 'Golden Treasury,' comparing Wordsworth's, Shelley's, and Keats's love of nature. We also discussed the morality of poetry—my ballad on the ghost of the lady who seeks her lover, Sebald and Ottima, Ford's Annabella, came uppermost. It is most hard to fix the limit of right and wrong in art. My father condemns Faust. I hardly condemn Annabella. Where the treatment of passion in poetry has the object of showing vice to be odious and to be

a Sodom's apple in its hollowness, I think great lengths are allowable. Of course, Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis' can on no such theory be excused. The 'Pygmalion' of Marston and the 'Salmacis' of Beaumont are unpardonable panderism, no less odious than Latin Priapics or the Centos of Ausonius. So, too, are the gross passages in 'Pericles' and Fletcher's plays—foisted in for the gratification of a prurient author or a prurient public. The coarse jests of Aristophanes in many cases were of this kind. In others satire cloaked their offence. The mere beauty of such a scene as that between Ottima and Sebald is not a ground against it. If it were not beautiful it would not be art; and if not art, it would be no better than a filthy newspaper. Its moral purpose could hardly here avail it: for a sermon would serve the end of ethics better than an ugly piece of realistic drama writing. Still, it may be doubted whether for the one who reads *de te fabula* in Sebald's loathing after sin, there are not hundreds who dwell only on the glow of passion in the picture, and think such joy but cheaply purchased by the loss of innocence and happy virtue.

Had I as many souls as there be stars,  
I'd give them all for Mephistopheles.

I talked a good deal about the two classes of artists: those in whom feelings predominate, whose songs are wrenched out of them by suffering; and those who sit down to describe, work up and labour at their fixed conceptions. Pangs of intense emotion precede birth in the one case; deliberate intellectual labour in the other. Poetry with the one class is an ichor which they will not staunch, but which consumes them. They would rather die than cease to sing, and cannot sing without a struggle of passion. With the other class it is a true artistic genesis, contrived and carried out by strength of mind. Compare Alfred de Musset and Tennyson, Byron or Shelley, and Goethe, Beethoven and Handel, Raffaello and Michael Angelo. When the struggles of the one class cease they are silent: they only 'learn in suffering what they teach in song.' Heine called De Musset, 'Un jeune homme d'un bien beau passé.' He gave up his passions, struggles, yearnings,

dreams at twenty-five, and ceased to be a singing bird till fifty, because he had ceased to feel acutely. Poets of the other class work on, thinking of their materials, careless of themselves, requiring only the stimulus of thought, and needing no preparatory storms.

[Symonds's depression, due no doubt to ill-health thwarting a powerful and active nature, finds expression in the following letter to Mr. Dakyns :]

'Your<sup>1</sup> letter was anything but meaningless. I understood it, I think, quite well, and I can sympathise with your despondent reflection on the "wasted idleness of existence." In fact, that is what I suffer from, and what I thought of when I told you that I was not well. What happens to me is that one tide of physical depression after another sweeps over me, and not one leaves me as I was before. Each weakens me ; I feel my strength of mind, and power of action and fancy and sense of beauty, and capacity of loving and delight in life, gradually sucked out of me. At the present moment I do not know what to do. Life is long for unnerved limbs and brains which started with fresh powers, now withered and regretful only of the past, without a hope for the future. I do not write this because I am not happy in my home. Far from that. But happiness, domestic felicity, and friends, good as they are, cannot make up for a *vie manquée*. If a man has in his youth dreamed of being able to do something, or has rashly promised himself to strike a creed out of the world, or else to be strong in scepticism—if setting forth thus, he has failed upon the threshold . . . then he resembles those for whom the poet wrote, "*Virtutem videant intabescantque relicta.*" But I am not in despair. No one should give over hope. I am only disappointed at the failure of anticipations, and sorrowfully convinced that the weakness of which I have been conscious is inherent and invincible.'

[The whole of this summer of 1865 was unusually rainy. From certain symptoms in the left side Symonds was, sub-

<sup>1</sup> To H. G. Dakyns. Sutton Court, Pensford, Aug. 20, 1865.



sequently, led to the conclusion that the seeds of pulmonary disease were laid, during his visit to Clifton. The Symonds had given up their lodgings in Albion Street, and on their return to London from the West of England they settled into No. 47 Norfolk Square, which Symonds had bought. The quiet of the situation was the chief inducement; but 'the situation proved gloomy, and not by any means favourable to health.' On October 22 their eldest daughter, Janet, was born at Norfolk Square. Symonds, in the midst of London life and occupations, was paying too little heed to his health, 'which had been very delicate since the return to London. The nurse warned me one day that my incessant cough was what she bluntly called "a churchyard cough."' Yet the diary all through this period is in reality highly vigorous, full of active thought and acute criticism. Symonds, in spite of difficulties which might well have daunted a less resolute nature, was, in fact, walking rapidly towards a decisive choice in life, as is indicated in this important extract.]

Nov. 30.<sup>1</sup>—My own wishes about the future become clearer. I have talked to Rutson, who, on the whole, agrees with me. To take up literature as a definite study—that is the kernel; to fit myself for being a good 'vulgariseur'—I am not an artist or originator. To do this I want study of literature and language, long study, while the Temple clock is always saying to me, 'Pereunt et imputantur.' Green thinks it would be base of me not to write, having some money and so clear a vocation. Jowett long ago told me I might be eminent in letters. Conington thinks I might write a history, but 'not unless he knows more than he's likely to learn at present.' Green and Rutson both see I am too much a mirror, lack individuality, need a bracing subject, need to give up magazine writing. I want to make my literature a business, to go down to it daily, to Lincoln's Inn, *e.g.*, to read steadily, putting on an Italian or German coach for one portion of the day, analysing Justinian for another, and writing hardly anything. If I

<sup>1</sup> Diary.



could do this, I have much time before me, and my home is daily brighter and better.'

[In this doubt as to his vocation for literature Symonds consulted his old friend, Mr. Jowett.]

'Dear Mr. Jowett,' he wrote, 'I should very much value your advice about a matter which is occupying my thoughts at present. Since I left Oxford I have, as far as my health permitted me, been reading law. I must allow that I have not been able to read much, owing to weakness of eyes and other ailments; but these, I am thankful to say, seem to be leaving me, and I am more capable of regular mental labour. At the same time, I find that law is not a subject which attracts me, or for which my powers seem to be specially fitted. Indeed it is with difficulty that I can bring myself to study it at all. I have never, since I had any definite wish, ceased to desire a life of literary study, and this wish grows upon me. I know I am not fitted for anything artistic in letters, or for pure philosophy. The history of literature is what I feel drawn to, and to this I should willingly devote my life. It does, in fact, require whole self-devotion, and I cannot follow it together with any other occupation so exhausting as law. Where, then, I need advice is here. Is it prudent for me to give up a profession and to choose literature? I do not mean prudent in a pecuniary point of view, but in an intellectual. Am I flying too high if I consecrate myself to study? I do not think that any one could give me better advice upon this point than you. What weighs with me in favour of literature is—first, my health, which could be more humoured in a life of study than at the bar; secondly, my inclinations, which are most decided in favour of study; thirdly, my capacities, which seem to me ill-adapted for the bar. Still literature is a service not lightly to be undertaken. And the strong assurance, from one who knows me so well as you do, and who knows all the difficulties of a student's life, that I am unfitted for it, would weigh greatly with me.

'I have been writing, at spare times, a history of our Elizabethan drama as an exercise, which is now about one-

third finished. But the point seems to have been reached at which I must definitely renounce writing, or make it the sole business of my life. Please do not trouble to answer this quickly. If I could speak to you ere long it would be better. My father told me he had some hope of a visit from you, and Miller said the same.—I am, ever yours most sincerely and gratefully,  
J. A. SYMONDS.'

[The answer came.]

'MY DEAR SYMONDS,—I should like to have a talk with you on the subject of your letter. Could you run down and see me this day week? or if not, I will try to come up and spend a day with you in London.

'I think that you are very likely right about the desertion of the Bar. Still I would urge you to be called, and to finish the elementary study of Law as a branch of literature or philosophy. In Hallam's "History of Literature" it strikes me that you can see the advantage to be had from legal knowledge. But let me have a good talk over the matter next Monday week, if you can come. I dine at 5.30, or any other time that will suit you.—With kind regards to Mrs. Symonds, ever yours in haste,  
'B. JOWETT.'

[That Symonds was already some way advanced along the line of literature before he sought Jowett's advice, and that the issue was already virtually settled, seems clear from this passage in the Diary:]

*September 9, 1865.*—I<sup>1</sup> am going on with the 'Dramatists.' This study is something like picking pearls from a dunghill. I sift and sift heaps of refuse, and find some real jewel. The discovery gives me a thrill of pleasure when it comes. The poetry of that period stills my soul like the sound of music. But I doubt whether I can transfer my sensations to my writing, and make others interested in what delights myself. This doubt must attend purely literary work. The artist sees beauty and arrests his visions, feeling them to be a joy for

<sup>1</sup> Diary.

ever. The historian of a period only tells what he has found, and cannot flatter himself that many people will welcome his discovery. What I should like to do would be to make my history of the English Drama a monograph on the development of the histrionic art. The literature of the English stage is the only complete one we possess. The earliest Athenian plays have perished. The Roman was an echo. The French received a violent twist, owing to the influence of Richelieu and the Academy. The Spanish in no sense equals ours. But the English Drama, from its germs in miracle plays, through its infancy in moralities, and its adolescence in Shakespeare and Ben Jonson and Fletcher, and its age in Massinger and others, is a complete organic whole. It is a flower of Art, national, perfect in its growth, as fit a subject for the physiology of æsthetics as Italian painting. To do this well, however, would require greater power and knowledge than I have at present. I can sketch out and survey the subject, but I cannot command it.

[The upshot of this visit to Jowett at Balliol was the] advice,<sup>1</sup> that I should get called to the Bar, translate a book like Zeller, try to connect myself with some hospital work in London, and not lose sight of possible politics in the future. He thought me very fortunate to be able to pursue my life, but recognised the consequent responsibilities and dangers of inaction. Literary life, he admitted, was, of all, the hardest, and needed much intercourse with men to keep it from pedantry and dulness: 'You have a very good memory, remarkable facility, and considerable powers of thinking. It depends on yourself to bring these to perfection.' He walked to the station with me, talking all the way. I had spoken of the difficulty of understanding what passed between the Resurrection and the preaching of Paul. 'There may be many ways of explaining that—some mystical, some psychological—but we should leave certain subjects as necessarily inexplicable. All historic criticism is so doubtful; and if we got the whole truth, we might not be able to sympathise

<sup>1</sup> Diary.

with that past age. What is really painful is to think of the structure of dogmas raised by men upon the one point of the Resurrection.' 'Yes, an inverted pyramid, the point remaining and the base always broadening, with men walking on the top, and fearing to tread too much on one side or another, lest they should bring it all down.' 'I've read a good deal lately of a French poet, Alfred de Musset.' 'Yes.' 'He saturated himself with German ideas, lost his old faith, and remained yearning after it and leading an impure life.' 'That's the lowest state of human weakness.' 'So it is, perhaps; but De Musset was a great poet, and many run the risks which lost him.' 'But men should keep their minds to duty.' 'That comes as an afterthought. At first when they throw off custom, they go groping and grovelling among the ghosts of dogmas. What you said at St. Andrew's about clinging to the great and simple truths as anchors has no meaning to them then. They must run clear before they can appreciate the value of those simple truths.' 'I daresay you're right.' 'That's why they cling to Comte and such systems in a modified sense.' 'Do you really think any young men get good from Comte?' 'Yes, in a modified way; it satisfies them to find a system, repudiating dogma and basing morality on an independent footing. *Vivre pour autrui*, and scientific exorcisms of old orthodox ghosts, restore their tone. They don't go farther.' 'The fact is, if you throw off custom, you must sink below it or rise above it. The club men you talked about, and common conventional Christians, do not really much differ.' 'But don't you think that connected with old custom there are some hopes and aspirations, and fear of hell, which raise people above it?' 'It does not do much for them. They would rise far higher if they could abandon custom, and look only to the great and simple things—if they would do their duty and try to benefit people around them.' 'But the means are not always ready.' 'I don't believe that's anything but indolence and want of invention on the part of most men. Every one must have somebody dependent on him or some sphere of usefulness.' By this time we had reached the platform, and I had to get my bags from the cloak-room. The

train came up. I thanked Jowett heartily for his kindness, shook him by the hand, saw his little form trot off among the porters, and was whisked away—full of thoughts, with hope and a purpose in me.

As<sup>1</sup> soon as my wife was able to move, a little before Christmas, we went down to Clifton. There my father examined me, and pronounced that there was mischief of a very serious kind at work at the apex of the left lung.

[That was on December 24. Dr. Symonds applied severe remedies, and kept his son indoors for some time. The imprisonment and this fresh menace to his health were a sharp trial for Symonds. Alone, indoors, looking over Bristol on the evening of Christmas-day, his thoughts all run back to his early Christmas memories, to his first strong affection; and the attraction of the cathedral where the others are—where he may not be—sweeps over him in his reverie. But however acute may have been the internal anguish, that high courage which sustained him through life, that root of determination and resistance which so pre-eminently characterised him, begins at once to make itself apparent; and when he announces the evil news to his friend, Mr. H. G. Dakyns, the message is cool, calm, brave.

‘I write to you most *ausführlich*, and express myself esoterically; so that when I should say to Miss —, “I have had a cold which kept me a few days in the house,” to you I word the same thing thus: “There is no danger, but it cannot be forgotten that my grandfather, and an aunt on the mother’s side, died of consumption, and that my sister has to winter out of England.”’

And yet, as Symonds had occasion to remark later on, the appearance of this lung trouble began almost immediately, though very slightly at first, to relieve the brain trouble from which he had suffered so acutely. His interest in literary and psychological problems asserts itself with vigour. He writes to Mr. Dakyns:]

<sup>1</sup> Autobiography.

‘If<sup>1</sup> you go to Farringford, I wish you would manage to talk to Tennyson about the “Sonnets of Shakespeare,” and tell me what he thinks about their emotional meaning. Palgrave has just published them with the omission of the twentieth—in some respects the most important of them all; and in a few words written by him at the end he appears to take the worst possible view of them. I have read and re-read those sonnets, and I have never been able to find any of the gross and shameful passion in them which Hallam and Palgrave find, and I may also add Coleridge. That they express humiliation and consciousness of some sort of guilt on Shakespeare’s part and overmastering affection cannot be denied. It seems also clear that he knew his friend to be unworthy of him, and a man of loose life. Yet I find nothing shameful in the poems themselves, nothing that indicates a disgraceful connection between Shakespeare and Mr. W. H——. Even the twentieth stanza, which Palgrave omits, and which in point of language is more gross than any others, seems to me to prove the exact opposite—the purity, I mean, of Shakespeare’s passion. I cannot but think that Palgrave may have consulted Tennyson about his edition of the sonnets, and it would interest me greatly to hear whether the author of “In Memoriam” has any views upon a subject so disputed.

‘You ask if the régime suits me. Six days indoors, blisters, morphia, and partial starvation do certainly not suit me; but, on the contrary, produce a head heaviness and eye weakness which is not enjoyable. The resurrection of power which I was beginning to feel during the last two months, and which had begun to express itself in the determination to make continuous efforts after higher art, dwindles again. Yet I am infinitely happier than I used to be, nor can I enough for this be thankful.’

[No signs of intellectual languor are apparent throughout the pages of the voluminous Diary; the whole record is intensely alive with sympathy for his friends, with minute discussions on the possibility of substituting a true *Moralität*

<sup>1</sup> To H. G. Dakyns. Clifton, December 27, 1865.



for mere *Sittlichkeit*—an echo of Jowett's remarks upon throwing off custom—with thoughts on art such as this: 'Beauty stings a sensitive soul, and ichor flows from the wound. In those who have artistic power this ichor forms a pearl. In others it drops silently away. Both suffer.' On friendship, such as this: 'It is a bad thing to base any friendship on uncommon and merely emotional sympathies; they may wear out. Friendship ought to be a matter of daylight, not of gas, red lights, or sky rockets.'

His attention was much occupied by Clough, whose works he was subsequently to edit in conjunction with Mrs. Clough.]

'This morning, being very dull, with snow, and my bad night, I read through "Clough's Remains." This book is more definite than Palgrave's Memoir in the Poems. The letters belong principally to his ante-married life, but they are not *ausführlich*. I am struck with this reticence, characteristic of his dry poetic style and social taciturnity. His boyhood is the most interesting part of his life. When he left Rugby he got into Ward's hands at Balliol, who upset his notions about things—"asking you your opinions" (so he speaks of him) "on every possible subject, beginning with Covent Garden and Macready, and certainly not ending till you got to the question of the moral sense and deontology." Ward turned him inside out.'

[That is a process which Symonds was meanwhile applying to himself; for all through the Diary, underlying his studies, underlying his affection for his friends, runs the perpetual strain of self-analysis, comparison, criticism, reproach. I find this characteristic entry:

'January 31, 1866.—This is truly sad about me; my brain is teeming with thoughts that cannot be expressed, because of my physical weakness. Poems of some sort, could I but work at them, would come from me. Yet, if I produce, my thoughts tear me like vultures; I have to leave the lines unfinished, or to complete them with a spasm, from which I sink back helpless. The poor palpitating fruits of this parturition

look but lean or rickety ; and yet I can never alter, nurse and cherish them. If I died to-morrow, my name would truly, as far as fame goes, be writ on water. On the hearts of some I know it would be written, but they too must die.'

Yet the approach of that illness which was induced by the damp summer of 1865, and declared itself in the winter, though it accounts for much of the depression which pervades the Diary, did not render Symonds incapable of much keen enjoyment. A fine performance of the 'Israel in Egypt,' that 'colossus of oratorios,' leads him to these vivid reflections.]

'I<sup>1</sup> was more lost in meditation on the nature of music than I have ever been before. Here was a man Handel, a fat native of Halle, in the Duchy of Magdeburg, articled at eight years old to an organist, and from that moment given up to music—a man who never loved a woman, who (to use the words of his enthusiastic biographer) continued irritable, greedy, fond of solitude, persevering, unaffectionate, coarse and garrulous in conversation, benevolent, independent, fond of beer, religious, without passions, and without a single intellectual taste. He had never received any education except in counterpoint. He had had no experience. Yet he could interpret the deepest psychological secrets ; he could sing dithyrambs to God, or preach moral sermons ; he could express the feelings of mighty nations, and speak with the voice of angels more effectually than even Milton ; he could give life to passion, and in a few changes of his melody lead love through all its variations from despair to triumph—there was nothing that he did not know. The whole world had become for him music, and his chords were co-extensive with the universe. Raphael's capability to paint the "School of Athens," after coming from the workshop of Perugino, was perhaps less marvellous than Handel's to delineate the length and breadth and height and depth of human nature in his choruses. We shall never comprehend, *nous autres*, the mysteries of genius. It is a god-sent clairvoyance, inexplicable, and different in kind from intellect.'

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte.

[Dr. Symonds wished his son to pass the cold spring months at Mentone. Symonds left home with some of that reluctance which always seized him when he had to part from Clifton, and all that it implied for him.]

*February 11, 1866.*<sup>1</sup>—Of all things let me not fall into the error of Sir Egerton Brydges, and incessantly distress myself about my poetic gifts, complaining that they are not recognised, wondering whether they are real, abusing those who deny them, uneasily questioning myself and others as to their validity. Let me enjoy and be content with that. Poetic feeling is not artistic power. The emotions which I experience while hearing music, in beautiful scenery, before fine pictures, in cathedrals, at the thought of noble men—these enable me to understand and to enjoy, intensify the glow of life, and raise me to a higher sphere. But from them to actual plastic art there is a mighty step to make.

*Friday, February 16.*—I am sick at heart for having to leave Clifton—this room where C. and I have sat so happily together in the mornings, with its city view; where Ch. has come to read with me—this country where C. and I have had such glorious walks—these downs where H. G. D. and I have had strange communings together, pacing up and down. I have learned, lived, enjoyed, and grown much in freedom, strength, and peace, and perhaps knowledge, here. Now we must soon break up our camp. And how little I have done of any sort! What unattainable mountain-tops above me! How the aspect of Goethe, of Dante, of Parmenides, of Petrarch—the great souls with which I have lived—of wind and rain and sunlight and clouds and woods, has filled me with inextinguishable yearnings and an agony of impotency. I am too full to give forth. ‘Joy impregnates; sorrows bring forth.’

[Symonds started for the Riviera on February 24, 1866, and here began the long series of journeys in search of health, and also a new phase in his Italian experience. He applied

<sup>1</sup> Diary.

himself to the serious study of the Italian language. He read the 'Decamerone' by himself, and Ariosto and Dante under the guidance of his Italian master, Signor Belochetto, at Mentone. He reported the progress of his studies to his sister in letters written in Italian. From Mentone he moved on to Bordighera and San Remo, whence he wrote to his father:]

'We<sup>1</sup> are all together now in the same hotel—Maribella, Mrs. Moore, Catherine, and myself. It is very pleasant, although we none of us think this place can bear any comparison with Mentone in point of beauty. It is prosaic by the side of so much romantic loveliness. I wish I could see little Janet: do you think she might be photographed for us? Auntie wrote that she was small, but I hope she still looks as pretty as she used to be, and that she is not wanting in intelligence for her age. I have been thinking so much of you to-day, and longing to see you again. Life is never so good a thing when I am separated from you by a long interval of time, and what is more, by so complete a distance of daily associations. Catherine made some lovely sketches at Bordighera, where we spent Monday and Tuesday. She has not done anything since she came here, but I hope that we shall not quit the Riviera without her making some studies of olive trees. The palms at Bordighera took her fancy, and they certainly are most beautiful—growing with an Oriental luxuriance in groves, or leaning over the city walls. I have also been doing some work—reading Italian and writing an article on Empedocles, which I may try perhaps to publish in the "North British Review." But as I have made use of the translations which I did for Jowett, I cannot print this paper unless I learn from him more accurately how he means to employ them. I have not received any acknowledgment from him of the arrival of my MS., but I daresay, as it is vacation time at Oxford, that he may not yet have got it. Thank you very much for sending me the "Edinburgh Courant." I was

<sup>1</sup> To Dr. Symonds. Hôtel de Londres, San Remo, Easter Sunday. April 1866.

extremely interested in the abstract of Jowett's lecture. The allusions to the unpaid and persecuted labours of Socrates made me think of Jowett himself. He always seems to me to find a consolation for his own troubles in the thought of great teachers—Socrates and Christ. Conington wrote me the other day a long letter containing much gossip about his and other people's translations, and also about the reception of "Ecce Homo" at Oxford. Jowett's party seem to have made rather light of it: Conington himself, as might have been expected from its want of favour with the Jowett school, gives it many kind words.'

[Of 'Ecce Homo' he writes in a letter to a friend: 'We have brought it out to read a second time together, for there is much in its chapters which I need to dwell upon; they seemed to me so new and strange, and raised so keen a desire for real assimilation in my mind.'

Passages in the Diary show how much he enjoyed the scenery of the Riviera, and how carefully he noted its beauties in pages which he worked up later on into his most popular travel sketches. But the climate, which Symonds found trying to his nerves, frequently provoked fits of internal depression; and the unrest was intensified by the continual thwarting of his aspirations through ill health.]

*March 18.*<sup>1</sup>—I fret because I do not realise ambition, because I have no active work, and cannot win a position of importance like other men. Literary success would compensate me: yet, the first steps to this seem always thwarted. Intellectual, moral, and physical qualities in combination are required for this success. I have the intellectual; the physical is always giving way without my fault, and the moral flags by my cowardly inertia. I am an over-cultivated being, too alive to all sensibilities to walk on one path without distraction, and so keenly appreciative of greatness in art and literature that I am disdainful of small achievements. Yet these gloomy reflections serve as spurs to goad me on. 'Venture, and thus

<sup>1</sup> Diary.



climb swift to Wisdom's height.' A man has but one life to lose: he can but strive; and if he fails at last and dies with nothing done, an unremembered weed, a sea-wrack on the barren shore, why, so have lived and died, hoped and despaired, petulantly struggled and then calmly sunk, thousands before him.

[In reaction from this mood the solicitations of Monte Carlo attract him; but as in a dream.]

*March 22.*—After <sup>1</sup> dawdling about Monaco itself we went round to the 'Jeux'—a large gambling-house established on the shore near Monaco, upon the road to Mentone. There is a splendid hotel there, and the large house of sin, blazing with gas lamps by night. So we saw it from the road beneath Turbia our first night, flaming and shining by the shore like Pandemonium, or the habitation of (some) romantic witch. This place, in truth, resembles the gardens of Alcina (? Armida), or any other magician's trap for catching souls, which poets have devised. It lies close by the sea in a hollow of the sheltering hills. There winter cannot come—the flowers bloom, the waves dance, and sunlight laughs all through the year. The air swoons with scent of lemon groves; tall palm trees wave their branches in the garden; music of the softest, loudest, most inebriating passion, swells from the palace; rich meats and wines are served in a gorgeously painted hall; cool corridors and sunny seats stand ready for the noontide heat or evening calm; without are olive gardens, green and fresh and full of flowers. But the witch herself holds her high court and never-ending festival of sin in the hall of the green tables. There is a passion which subdues all others, making music, sweet scents, and delicious food, the splash of the melodious waves, the evening air and freedom of the everlasting hills, subserve her own supremacy.

When the fiend of play has entered into a man, what does he care for the beauties of nature or even for the pleasure of the sense? Yet in the moments of his trial he must drain the

<sup>1</sup> Diary.



cup of passion, therefore let him have companions—splendid women, with bold eyes and golden hair and marble columns of imperial throats, to laugh with him, to sing shrill songs, to drink, to tempt the glassy deep at midnight when the cold moon shines, or all the headlands glimmer with grey phosphorescence, and the palace sends its flaring lights and sound of cymbals to the hills. And many, too, there are over whom love and wine hold empire hardly less entire than play. This is no vision: it is sober, sad reality. I have seen it to-day with my own eyes. I have been inside the palace, and have breathed its air. In no other place could this riotous daughter of hell have set her throne so seducingly. Here are the Sirens and Calypso and Dame Venus of Tannhäuser's dream. Almost every other scene of dissipation has disappointed me by its monotony and sordidness. But this inebriates; here nature is so lavish, so beautiful, so softly luxurious, that the harlot's cup is thrice more sweet to the taste, more stealing of the senses than elsewhere. I felt, while we listened to the music, strolled about the gardens, and lounged in the play-rooms, as I have sometimes felt at the opera. All other pleasures, thoughts, and interests of life seemed to be far off and trivial for the time. I was beclouded, carried off my balance, lapped in strange forebodings of things infinite outside me in the human heart. Yet all was unreal; for the touch of reason, like the hand of Galahad, caused the boiling of this impure fountain to cease—the wizard's castle disappeared, and, as I drove homeward to Mentone, the solemn hills and skies and seas remained, and that house was, as it were, a mirage.

Inside the gaming-house play was going forward like a business. *Roulette* and *rouge et noir* tables were crowded. Little could be heard but the monotonous voice of the croupiers, the rattle of gold under their wooden shovels, and the clicking of the ball that spun round for *roulette*. Imperturbable gravity sat on the faces of men who lost or won. Several stern-faced, middle-aged women were making small stakes, and accurately pricking all the chances of the game on cards. A low buzz ran through the room, but this came

chiefly from the lookers-on like ourselves. Occasionally a more than usually loud trumpet or shrill clarionette sounded from the music hall. Two men attracted my interest. One was a terrier-faced Englishman, with reddish hair and a sanguine complexion. He staked largely, and laughed at his winnings and losings indifferently. A very astute man, who did not play himself, seemed to be backing him up and giving him advice. The other was a splendid-looking fellow—a tall, handsome, well-made Piedmontese he seemed to be—at least he had a favourable resemblance to Victor Emanuel. His small head, with crisp brown hair, fresh colour, light moustache and long imperial, cold bluish eyes, and steadfast frown, was set upon a little muscular neck, and that upon the body of a Hermes with most perfect hands. There was something innocent in his face; yet the whole man looked like a sleek panther. It would be easy to love him; the woman who should love him would be happy for some days, and then would most probably be broken. But strong determination and cool devilry sat in his face. He seemed once to lose everything. Then he went out and soon returned with bank notes, some of which he paid away and some of which he staked. Then he gained gold, bank notes and *rouleaux*, but he still continued playing with perfect *sang froid*. When the *rouge et noir* stopped for a minute, he got up and made a large stake at *roulette*, and left a serving man to watch it for him when his favourite game began again. C. said he was like Rolla. Certainly when he is ruined he will shoot himself. At present he is fresh and fair and charming to look at, his great physical and moral strength, though tempered wickedly, being a refreshing spectacle.

The croupiers are either fat, sensual cormorants, or sallow, lean-cheeked vultures, or suspicious foxes. So I term them; yet they only look like wicked bankers' clerks, like men narrowed and made sordid by constant contact with money in a heartless trade, and corrupted by familiarity with turns of luck instead of honourable business rules. Compare them with Coutts' men to note the difference. It is very discernible; for, though in externals much alike, these men of the gaming

bank show every trace of a dissolute youth and a vile calling, of low sensuality and hardened avarice, upon their faces.

We noticed that almost all the gamblers had light blue eyes. No exhibition of despair was visible; yet I saw many very jaded young men, and nervous old men, bleary-eyed fellows staking eagerly five-franc pieces. My young Rolla was the royal one—the prince of gamblers in that room—and but for him the place would have had no romance for me. It must be an odd life: lounging and smoking in the gardens, listening to Verdi in the music hall, gormandising in the *salle à manger*, and enjoying every beauty of southern spring, together with the fiery pleasures of that hazard. Eschman says, he had once to pawn his own clothes for a young fellow who gambled away 2,000*l.* at Homburg, and then wanted to go back to England. I have not enough continuity of good spirits, of self-deception, and of resolution, to gamble. Under the influence of some kind of passion, I could fancy going into it for a moment, but the yoke would be to me most odious. How nerves can bear it I wonder. But my Rolla's nerves are tigerish, and like the tickling which would rend me to atoms. Perfect coolness and concentration of fever-producing calm marked this man. His whole soul was in the play.

[This stimulation of the senses in the imaginative region is worked out, harmonised, and laid to rest, for a time, in such long flights of criticism as this which follows—criticism in embryo, it is true, but interesting in itself as a singular *tour de force*—for a single morning's work; and valuable as showing how, under the stress of strong feeling, Symonds projected the thoughts which he subsequently wrought into his finished critical judgments.]

*Thursday, April 5.*<sup>1</sup>—In Wordsworth, Byron, Keats, Shelley, Coleridge, Tennyson, and Browning, the English Renaissance, the Elizabethan age has revived, no longer taking the dramatic or Epic form, but that of narrative and lyrical poetry, passionate, reflective, egotistical, religious, patriotic. The increased interest in Elizabethan authors—

<sup>1</sup> Diary.

Charles Lamb, the Shakespearians—was a sign of this revival. Poets sought Elizabethan phraseology, like Byron in the first Canto of *Childe Harold*, or Elizabethan richness, like Keats. All rules of art and French classicisms were discarded; Wordsworth preached a natural diction. The two ages [the Italian and the English Renaissance] are similar; freedom of religious thought, political freedom, a new impulse given to all speculation, the movement of the French Revolution answering to that of the Reformation. During the interval, diplomacy had cramped politics, torpor had benumbed religion, philosophy had crawled upon the lowest ground of calculation and self-interest, poetry had ceased to be anything but a mechanical arrangement of words in obedience to some artificial standard of correct taste. Men strove in every department to be as much alike as possible. The sixteenth and nineteenth century spirit tends to individuality in art at least. The seven names above are infinitely different in everything except a common afflatus and common Elizabethanism. Parallel to this English movement there has been, in other countries, a return to the fountain-head of literature. The Italians have studied Dante, Giusti, Leopardi. The Germans have created a literature in affiliation to our Elizabethan age. The French have their Romantic School. What is the essence of Elizabethanism? In the first place, freedom. Freedom of thought; freedom from bondage to great names, like those of Virgil, or Cicero, or Voltaire; or to great languages, like the Latin; or to great canons of criticism, like the Aristotelian unities. Freedom from servility to potentates and patrons—our playwrights are as liberal as the wind of their words, their Elizabeth is England; compare them with an Ariosto inspired by flattery alone; with the dedicatory poets of the eighteenth century. Religious freedom; notice what Decker dared to say of Christ, what Heywood spoke about the Bible in his *Chronicle of Elizabeth*. Political freedom—intolerance of foreign rule; compare this with the restoration, identification of popular liberties and royalty—of royalty and popular religion. The freedom of youth, untrammelled, with a boundless future and no past, with the luxuri-

ance of young blood, the consciousness of youthful beauty, the carelessness of young audacity, the fields untrodden and the flowers unpicked—a virgin soil and lusty husbandmen to till and sow and store unbounded harvests. Freedom from precedent; no great examples to weigh down the wings of genius, no rules to hamper its flight, no academies to judge, impose, condemn, and censure. The result of this freedom was that every man wrote what he thought best, wrote from himself, so that individuality marked every utterance. And the tendencies of this freedom were regulated by a national spirit, patriotic, highly moral, religious, intensely human, animated by a firm belief in reality, careless of books, courageous, adventurous, eager for scientific discoveries, ambitious of acquiring wealth and power, conscious of its own energy, martial yet jealous of domestic peace, assiduous in toil, quick to overleap material barriers, and revel in the wildest dreams of the imagination, manly, delicate, trained in long trials of foreign and civil wars, of factions, of religious persecutions. Elizabethanism is, in fact, the genius of a mighty nation young and free, as manifested in its literature. Further than this in analysis we cannot go, any more than we can analyse the genius of Shakespeare or Beethoven in itself. Yet we may show what circumstances favoured the origin and development of genius, whether in a nation or in a man; what characteristics distinguish it from other kinds or instances of genius. Elizabethanism is, then, the genius of England, as displayed in literature when England was free and adolescent.

At every period, therefore, of freedom and adolescence, we may expect to find Elizabethanism in England, if literature be not altogether suppressed. And this is why we see it reappearing in the nineteenth century, in that Pleiad, who were stirred by the vast political renaissance of 1790, by the religious renaissance inaugurated by French destructive scepticism, and by the scientific renaissance which opened a new horizon to the world. Freedom leapt aloft, and the English poets answered to her call. New youth flowed in the mother's ancient veins. The winter weeds of two dead centuries were cast aside.



But 'Tempora mutantur, nos et mutamur in illis.' The dreams of the sixteenth century have been exchanged for more sober expectations ; there is no El Dorado now, but California. Faith has succumbed to criticism ; religious liberty consists in the right to doubt, not to believe as we like ; and political liberty in the tranquillity of the individual less than in the majesty of the people. We ply our commerce and preach ! non-intervention ; we do not seek to extend our empire or to carry our crusades against the enemies of our religion or our peace. We are readers and not hearers. There is no public for theatrical display. The poetry of the outward world has been exchanged for that of the inner life, of action for reflection, of passions for analysis of passions. All these reasons, and many more, explain why the renewed Elizabethanism is lyrical and egotistical instead of dramatic and patriotic. We have youth and freedom indeed ; but our youth is the youth of a man, our freedom the freedom of a man—not the youth of a nation, or the freedom of a nation.

As a result of illimitable freedom the Elizabethans fell into the error of extravagance and exaggeration. This they showed in the expression of their own sentiments, in their language, in their indulgence of the fancy, in their profuse ornamentation, in the characters of their drama, in their preference for striking incidents and rant, over good taste and select diction. No force from without controlled them, and they had no internal power of self-control. The motto *μηδὲν ἄγαν* was peculiar to the Greek temperament ; it has been assumed by other literatures advisedly and in imitation of the Greek. Mediævalism had nothing of it, and the Elizabethans were children of the Middle Ages. When the Elizabethan spirit in England gave place to the pseudo-classic, then the good and bad effects of an imposed limit were produced. We had our Dryden, and our Pope, and our writers of limpid prose. But the true genius of our literature was in abeyance, and when it reappeared it brought with it the evils of extravagance and exaggeration.

Yet even in this exuberance and unmeasured fecundity we find one of the excellent qualities of Elizabethanism. Such a



wealth of suggestive thought, such a deep sympathy with nature, such a power of expressing the secrets revealed by the outward world to the percipient mind, such a clairvoyance into the innermost chambers of the human soul, never belonged to any other literature, and would not have belonged to ours had the limitations of Art been more regarded, had men thought of the form more, repressed the *élan* of their genius, and sought to prune. Elizabethanism has the spirit of modern Christian art, as typified in music. It is profuent, profuse of emotion, unapt to restrain itself to one note or one series of notes, eager to pour forth its passion in every variety, by means of countless simultaneous instruments, by means of numerous and subtle changes and developments of meaning. It is all iridescent, Gothic, manifold.

Carelessness, want of balance, defective judgment in the selection of materials or their management, bad taste, superfluities of every kind, mark the Elizabethan art. It is also remarkable for energy, pomp of language, swelling sound, magnificent improvisation, beauties tossed like foam upon the waves of thought by means of mere collision. It has nothing small or mean or calculated. Its vices are the vices of the prodigal, not of the miser, and of the prodigal whose want of prudence is more near to generosity than wanton waste. We forgive its many faults for its inexhaustible fertility, and lose ourselves in wondering at its wealth and strength and liberality. Every word of this paragraph would need alteration were we to apply it to the English of the pseudo-classic age. If not miserly, then our genius was very thrifty. It erred by caution rather than by haste. It doled its treasures out as one who has a purse indeed, but cannot, like the Midas of the true Elizabethan age, turn all it touched into gold.

Blank verse and prose are the two vehicles by which it expresses itself—using both lyrically, governing the periods of both by internal melody and rhythms, making blank verse more harmonious than any rhymed metre, and prose more poetical than the verse of other nations. The dramatists and Milton for verse, the greatest divines, Sir T. Browne and Milton, for prose, are the products of the first Elizabethan era ;

De Quincey, Ruskin, and even the faulty 'fine writers' of the present day, incarnate the new Elizabethan spirit in prose composition. Blank verse, too, has regained ascendancy after the forced reign of the rhyming couplet. But we have few real masters of blank verse. It is in lyric poetry that we excel now.

It is a sign of the Elizabethan spirit never to hesitate or palliate. And the mantle in this also has fallen on the new age. 'Don Juan,' Shelley's 'Epipsychidion,' Browning's 'Paracelsus' and 'Pippa Passes,' 'Guinevere,' and Wordsworth's 'Poems on Life,' set forth aspects of morality as various, as original, as bold, as hazardous as those of the Elizabethans. But they are more analytical, and subjective in obedience to the temper of the age. We have never produced an Alfred de Musset.

The Elizabethan genius first made Nature for her own sake a study. The poems of Shakespeare are full of observations, allusions, elaborate pictures of natural phenomena, from flowers up to the thunder. Nothing was too small or too great for his muse. Seneca says of some hero—'Non circum flosculos occupatur,' using *flosculos* metaphorically; but the sentence may be applied directly; a classic would disdain the enumeration of flowers which we find in 'Winter's Tale.' This quality has reappeared even to excess in Keats and Shelley, but in admirable force in Wordsworth, who gives life to the minutiae of nature. Byron has been said to have followed her with lust, and Wordsworth professed for her a raging passion which toned down into philosophy. And the quality we speak of is now seen most strongly in our school of landscape painters, musicians, lyrists, writers of sounding prose and various blank verse, in colours, not in words or tones; indeed, wherever the dominion of the Elizabethan spirit is felt, this quality is apparent. In France, G. Sand, De Guérin, A. de Musset, V. Hugo, are names enough to signalise the true union which subsists between this devotion to nature for her own sake and that essential freedom which we regard as the central point of Elizabethanism. Music, landscape painting, and a pantheistic sympathy with outer nature, more symbol-seeking and penetrative than the old classic pantheism, meet in our Renaissance.

A great difference between the old and new Elizabethan spirit exists also in the form and range of thought. Refinements and subtle-subtilisings of all sorts have succeeded to keen intuitions into nature, yet we have lost the euphuism of the past; we are more cultivated in a good and a bad sense, less able to look directly at things, more on our guard against mere mannerisms of expression. The earlier Elizabethans had no 'Lazzaretto poetry.' We have very much. There is now far more involution of sentences and laborious effort after recondite phrases. Again, the subtleties of our rhythms—Shelley's, *e.g.*—transcend that of the old Elizabethan; the Wordsworthian vein reveals a new kind of philosophical and Christian pantheism; the man of thought is more, of action less; the problems of life are probed with more of casuistical nicety, displayed with less of tragic pomp and human breadth. These parallels might be extended to a tedious length. Read 'Adonais' side by side with 'Hero and Leander,' and note.

This diatribe, being very ill this morning, I wrote to distract my mind from its troubles, to rouse me from a clinging lethargy in which will, memory, physical force, and power of thought seemed all exhausted. I could do nothing—fix my attention on no book, endure no company, take interest in nothing outside. It did me good; and the afternoon spent with C. among the gigantic olives, deep grass meadows, and clear streams of the Val des Oliviers pleased me. I walked in a dream. Scirocco was blowing.

[His fits of depression were cheered by letters from Jowett, whose hopeful, vigorous tone proved now, as always, of immense service to Symonds's diffident sensitiveness.]

'MY DEAR SYMONDS,—Many thanks indeed for the translation of Empedocles. I think that it and the other translations will greatly add to my first volume for the appendix to which I destine them. And if you will do me Democritus I shall be greatly obliged. But I sha'n't expect this. There is a separate book of Mullach's on Democritus which you might find an advantage in perusing. There is no hurry, as I certainly sha'n't want to print them before the end of the year.

I often feel that I have undertaken too big a work, and can only hope that I may survive to do something else. I hope that you are better. I don't suppose that you were really in any danger. But I am glad that you took the precaution of going away. And I am glad that you have got a wife to take care of you.

'I think that you may look forward to a literary life with good hope and prospect of success. To have nothing to do is the best of all lives, if you only make something real to do. You escape the narrowing influence of a profession, and what you do for others is far more deeply felt. The point is, I think, to get a position and occupation, and each year to look as anxiously to one's own progress as you would to the coming in of briefs at the bar.—Ever yours,

B. JOWETT.'

[As summer drew on the Riviera was left behind for Genoa, Pisa, Lucca, Florence, Ravenna, Milan. Then the travellers set their faces northward, and here are some notes of their journey:]

'I<sup>1</sup> was glad to get your letter yesterday, and to know that you are well. For the rest I wait until I see you, feeling sure that you will tell me all I want to hear. The prospect is very dull to-day. A thick raincloud has descended on the Lago Maggiore, and the islands loom shivering from it with a mournful cheerlessness. I have nothing to do but to sit and think and write (if I had something to write about), and read Italian. We are weatherbound in a corner of an old inn, with some four or five other people. One of these is a physical philosopher, a scientific man, to whose confession of faith I have just been listening. Ah me! how many faiths are there in the world, and what gods do not ye worship, Israel. He thinks it is but a question of time until we shall know God by means of our senses, and until the Pantheistic Being be fully developed through spontaneous generation. But what the good of the knowledge, that he does not say, nor how the

<sup>1</sup> To H. G. Dakyns. Baveno, May 25, 1866.

Pantheistic Being subsists. We know just as little about such matters as Empedocles.

‘*Sunday*.—I cannot write away from home. You say, and say truly, that perfect communication subsists between people living in the same place and writing to each other. Written words then supplement spoken words. Looks, silences, and tones of voice complete what these leave imperfect. The souls then touch at all points, and, what is of grave import, their physical surroundings are the same. Breathing one air, seeing the same beautiful landscapes, enjoying the same sun, and shivering under the same fogs, nothing from the world outside destroys the sense of sympathy. But when we are so far away—when I in Italy sit by the shore of Verbanus, among the cool ferns, gazing at the distant snow overcast with thunder-clouds—when you in England hear the thrushes, hanging over those ravines of wood, or listen to the English sound of Sunday prayer and praise—when I, poor I, far, far away, am frightened by these madding powers of nature, incommunicable, sad, weighed down by forebodings, unintelligible even to myself, haunted by the past, feeling the present an impalpable nightmare, fixing vacant eyes on the insupportable future—when we are so, and the arrowy scents of narcissus and honeysuckle mixed with nightingale music distract my brain if I sit down to write—how on this Sunday morning can I feel at one with you or any one in dear far-off England? I know what is passing there. I can enter the cathedral at Bristol, where they are now chanting *Te Deum*, and the coloured light streams from those southern windows, as it did eight years ago. I can lie in darkness in the ante-chapel of Magdalen and listen to the roaring of that tempestuous organ, or, last of all, I know the stillness of our Clifton home, the silent pictures, the grave books, the light and flowers and undefinable fragrance of perpetual feminine possession. These things I see—see, do I say?—feel, handle, live among. But I am here, after all, by the sounding shore of Verbanus; and the channel of sympathy is cut off, and do what I will I cannot, by writing to you, stir the load of mournful presage which weighs upon me. There is in Marlowe the image of an old king, dethroned and



discrowned, who, waking from sleep and talking with his murderer, is reminded of his crown, whereat he cries, "Where is my crown? Gone, gone, and do I yet remain alive?"

'The word which tolls in my ears, night and day is "waste." When I wake from sleep I cry like the wretch in Persius, "Imus, imus præcipites." My soul is stagnant, and I see no God, no reason for the world, no vigour in myself, no content in things around me, nothing but slow-sliding barren years. Yet I do hate this barren curse of self-indulgent cowardice and wasted youth. I struggle in my chains and shake the bars, impotent maniac. O Lord! how long! hast Thou forgotten to be gracious? Will not Christ come again? "But if He came," so says the voice of the Lord speaking from the depth of this dead soul, "art thou one to take His cross, to preach His creed, to lie in caves, to fight with beasts, to see the beauty of the purity of holiness and naked truth, thou whose small intelligence and little Will have been consumed in useless questions, enervating feelings, over-cultivation, sickness, and sin? Go, saltless soul, go to the dunghill, rot there thirty years, and wait My time." Arise: we will away to the mountains and the snow, and will strive to forget, moving restlessly from place to place, and frittering thought away in little things.'

[To the mountains, accordingly, they went. The change from the languid air of the Lakes to the bracing air of the Alps is indicated at once by the rise of the spiritual mercury in Symonds's sensitive structure.]

'After<sup>1</sup> two most brilliantly beautiful days our own weather has returned, thunder, mists, and deluges of rain. We are safely boxed up for the rest of the day in a little mountain inn, with a torrent foaming beneath our windows, and the crags towering up above us, wreathed with fleecy clouds among the pines and beeches and brown châteaux. It is a real Alpine village, such as I used to long for in London last summer.

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte. Fobello, Monday, June 4, 1866.



‘ Since I last wrote we have been making a kind of royal progress through these valleys. It is quite absurd to see how the people know and greet Catherine, and with what affection they remember Mr. North. This began at Baveno, where the landlord and landlady received us with effusion as old friends. While we were there we wrote to Gaspard, whom perhaps you may remember at our wedding. He is landlord of Macugnaga, a very important person in those parts, and a Swiss of more than common intelligence and gravity. He passed three winters at Hastings, and never tires of discussing the North family and its affairs. Well, Gaspard, when he heard that we had come to Lago Maggiore, announced his intention of walking down to see us. We, however, had gone on to Orta before he arrived, and he had to follow us, which he did in the incessant deluge. Catherine and I made an expedition from Orta, and were returning across the lake. A squall had just begun to rush down from the Simplon mountains, not a boat was to be seen upon the lake, the waves were rising high, and I was wondering whether we should not have to take refuge on the Island of San Giulio, when suddenly I spied another nutshell of a bark upon the waters making way towards us. A sedate man, with a yellow beard, sat alone inside it, and Catherine soon recognised him for Gaspard. Our boats met in mid-sea, and he sprang on board. He had crossed the Motterone that morning, and was not content with waiting for us at Orta, but must needs set out again to find us in the middle of our excursion. The old proprietor of the inn at Fobello, called Uccetta, is an old friend of the Norths, and Uccetta’s wife, Maddalena, has an almost romantic affection for Catherine. She is not an unimportant person in these parts. She brought her husband, for her dower, the inn which they have just sold, and have bought for themselves a country-house high up among the pastures, with a garden and an Alp for the cows. I wish you could see her tall straight figure and handsome face—such dark bright eyes, and such a beautiful complexion. I do not know how it is, but though they work hard, and expose themselves continually to the sun, the women of this valley have all of them the freshest colour,

and keep their looks of youth and health far longer than any other mountaineers whom I have seen. I wish also that I could give you the least idea of their costume. You must begin by fancying a Vivandière, for a company of Fobello peasant women resembles a regiment of soldiers in petticoats. They wear trousers of a dark blue, blue shoes edged with red, a short blue skirt, also edged with red cloth, descending to their knees. On their head they have a large red kerchief and ribands, or "bindelle" as they call them, of any colours that they choose. The dress is completed by a white kind of Garibaldi and a stomacher, curiously wrought with open work of coloured silks, and a strange ugly pouch in front. This pouch contains everything—it is sometimes large enough to carry a baby, like the pouches of the kangaroos; but I do not think the matrons of Fobello use it for this purpose—keys and money and pocket-handkerchiefs, and knives and thimbles and cotton, being the contents which Maddalena showed us in her pouch. In wet or cold weather they put on a short man's jacket of blue cloth over the Garibaldi, tuck up the skirts to give their trousers freer play, and shoulder a huge Gampish umbrella. Well, fancy the tall, handsome Maddalena suddenly appearing in this dress, clapping her hands, shrieking and laughing with surprise and pleasure, and embracing Catherine. She took possession of us for the day. Uccetta himself was trout-fishing. So we went up to see their new house, and there she sat us down to drink white Asti and cream. Two bottles of Asti were opened, and a huge cream-bowl with a ladle was produced from the dairy. Each of us had a smaller basin for our share. To refuse her hospitality was impossible; to drink either Asti or cream in the midst of walking on a hot day is against all my principles: to drink the two together at any time shocks all my notions of propriety. I had often discoursed to Catherine on the unwholesomeness of sweet Asti, and the danger of drinking uncooked milk when one is hot. Yet, here I had, with smiles upon my face, to finish a huge basin of the one, together with the larger portion of a bottle of the other. It was a ludicrous situation, and no ill results followed. Maddalena kept talking

and laughing all the time with that perfect absence of self-consciousness and that true good-breeding which I have always found among the peasants of the Alps. They get this freedom of manners, combined with respect, from the condition of society in the mountains, I suppose. Here there are no differences of class, strictly speaking. All talk the same *patois*, share the same interests, receive the same education, wear the same dress. Wealth constitutes the only distinction between man and man; a youth born of poor parents may make money abroad, and return to spend his later manhood as a village magnate. These people are not unconscious of the difference which subsists between them and us; but the difference of what we call rank is lost in the difference of nation and habits—they neither presume upon familiarity, nor do they take it with that kind of cringing satisfaction which is so odious in the vulgar of our own country. When Uccetta returned from fishing—we met him with his basket of trout and long fishing-rod by the bank of the Mastalone—his reception of Catherine was grave and almost paternal. Like all truly great men, and it must not be forgotten that he is a culinary artist “*meritamente famoso*,” he is modest, not to say timid and retiring. Such a huge broad-shouldered cook I never saw: yet, he is gigantically soft in manner; as if he were pondering on confections, and as if the heat and study of his art had made him prematurely grave and old. I wish you could have heard the torrents of bad Italian which fell from us four, Maddalena cackling and Uccetta drizzling, as it were, in *patois*, Catherine and I stumbling and stuttering over our villainous Italian. Yet we managed to make ourselves enough understood on both sides. But the best was when Uccetta began to talk about the new hands into which his hotel had fallen. His melancholy touched the true sublime, when he reflected that he could not cook our dinner for us, and that we should be served at his own table by the inferior artist who now lords it in his kitchen. Each time I have seen him he has pathetically renewed his complaint, and on my telling him that I am sure the present landlord does his best, he shakes his head, and says, “*Vuole, è vero, ma non può.*” ’

[The travellers reached the Val Anzasca, and the neighbourhood of Monte Rosa; the daily intercourse with that superb mountain as seen from Macugnaga, where the Symonds stayed, evoked the following disquisition, nominally on the art of landscape painting, really on the method of art and criticism in general. It helps to explain that abundance and charm of conversation which was so characteristic of Symonds. The man who had stored all these reflections for his own use on paper, could not fail to flow when tapped by talk:]

*Wednesday,<sup>1</sup> June 13, 1866.*—I talked a good deal to C. last night about the way in which she ought to approach painting, and, having sermonised so much, it is my duty to render to myself an account of what she said, and see whether it comes to anything.

It seems to me that she is one of those who willingly ignore the human element, who have not recognised those sentiments which alone can touch the hearts of men. They are lost in admiration of pure nature; the exceeding wonder of the world seems enough for them; they do not hear ‘the low sad music of humanity,’ among the choruses of Alps and sunlight; they sit down before a Monte Rosa or a Jungfrau and try to put it on their canvas. What is the result?—a more or less accurate portrait of the mountain, very dear to those who know its face, because of the recollections it calls up, but not a poem, not a work of human art, not an appeal to human feelings, and wholly inadequate as a representation of the original when judged by the standards of true criticism. Poets often fall into similar mistakes—they fancy that their admiration of some great scene, and their minute description of the same, will constitute a poem. One such a line as—

‘Sur l’Hymette j’ai éveillé les abeilles,’

or

‘Qui per saxa volutus  
Clarior electro campum petit amnis,’

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<sup>1</sup> Diary.

is worth all their eloquence. (*N.B.*—I am continually falling into this error of cold description, mistaking my own enthusiastic sense of the beauties of a subject for the power of rendering the same to others. A word in season, a single touch, an allusion to some universal vein of human sentiment, a delicacy of cadence, are worth more than myriads of carefully-chosen cataloguing phrases. George Sand will often put a picture on her pages because she is steeped in sentiment, because her characters have taken hold of you, and their emotions make you see the landscape which she would describe.) C.'s sketches are too much like these cold efforts of a poet to describe all that he has admired, except that they have the solid advantage of being topographically instructive and true portraits, of beautiful things—whereas his are words—but in point of poetry they do not rank high. A little scrap of larch or rock, or rivulet or cloud, truly felt, would be worth more than Eigers and Jungfraus white against blue sky. They would act by suggestion, just as such a line as 'The scent of violets hidden in the grass,' acts by suggestion. A Turner may infuse into the whole of a vast picture the burning soul of eloquence and poetry—he may make sunrise or sunset upon his canvas more gorgeous than the real heavens; but smaller artists must be content to compass smaller subjects. To paint Monte Rosa, so as to infuse into it true poetry, is almost as great a task of genius as to write a true Pindaric ode.

But—here I touch upon the most difficult part of the subject—what is this poetry of which I speak, how is it to be attained, how is the transition to be made from prose to poetry? To begin with, I think there is no doubt that all pictures ought to be the copies not of the landscape merely, but of the landscape as reflected on the soul. And by 'reflected on the soul,' I mean that the landscape must have impressed itself upon the sensitive, creative mind of man, have stirred ideas there, have gathered round its forms the prismatic hues of fancy, memory, or *Sehnsucht*. The image impressed is what the painter ought to represent, and, if he is successful, he will stir the souls of those who see his picture as by the reading of a poem. To illustrate this, I remember going out



at Engelberg one evening, and seeing the evening star above the mountains in a tract of watery sky, the lines, 'Ueber allen Gipfeln ist Ruh,' came into my mind, striking the keynote of a thousand deep emotions, and I had my picture poem. Again by the sea, Timon's last words sound in my ears and transfuse the beach, the foam, the rocks, the breakers, with a sentiment which, if I were a painter, I would strive to set on canvas. C. tells me that the psalms come into her head all through a long day among the Alps. There is the same thing—she ought to get some waif of them upon her paper; but she ascends at once to religion, to adoration, which are the highest pinnacles of poetry, and not having power to express them, falls back to earth and simple imitation.

Half our admiration of Nature is passive, inasmuch as we render no account of it to ourselves, but are content to look and wonder and rejoice and praise. This is all well; nothing is nobler than the quiet brimful delight of the soul in face of what is beautiful. But I do not think that this is the artist's attitude; a work of art requires the full activity of the soul, intense reflection on the capabilities of the subject, a steady aim with regard to the single effect to be produced, definite sentiments, and an idea that dominates. He who desires to paint poetically must return frequently upon himself, must sit down patiently before his landscapes, making clear the thoughts that come into his mind, must never hope to paint a poem unless some definite emotion throws new light upon the object which he sees. He may cultivate the poetic insight in many ways—first, by studying Art, which for this purpose (supposing him to have the 'raw' material of emotion, and to need the power of expression chiefly) is better than Nature. Nature is the order of God's world, Art of man's. Our study of Art teaches us the mechanism by which man's soul is moved, the great emotions which have always stirred it, and to which all poets have recurred. Poetry is the most universal of Arts. Frequent reading of poetry would be good, or pondering on pictures, or feeling music. The habit of analysis is also useful—to see how artists have wrought, how they have selected their subjects, in what lights they have placed them,



how far they have succeeded, what in them is chaff, and what is wheat. Next, there must be continual meditation, a constant rendering of accounts to the soul of all that charms us, every attempt to be definite. Again, the choice of subjects goes a long way. An artist who mistrusts his powers should paint nothing but what suggests to his mind some feeling—he should choose the mists and glooms, and wild lights and fantastic details, and suggestive wayside bits of Nature, which are lyrical, instead of those great landscapes which are epical. I pre-suppose that he has technical ability. Again, what is very necessary is the study of style. Ruskin seems to me to have done some harm by making people exchange style for mere imitation. I do not want them to falsify Nature—I would only have them remember that many poetical effects are only to be produced by manipulating Nature, by suppressing, heightening, deepening, in obedience to the inner rhythm which desires to strike a peculiar chord. If Nature could be perfectly copied—which would be the same as making a new nature—that would be the best, perhaps. But we cannot do that. We must be content with modification. Style consists in making that necessary modification subserve poetic purposes. Use your knowledge and technical ability, not merely for the purpose of accuracy, which often impedes poetry, though it makes honest prose, but also as the servants of an inner and idealising faculty. Which is of more value, a yellow primrose painted by Hunt, or a poem on a primrose written by Wordsworth? Suppose we say the former—what is its value? All the spring days we have spent among mossy lanes and woods, spring hopes, the valley by Mentone, etc. Yes; but a primrose itself would serve better. It would, if we could always get one; but the primroses only bloom in spring, and the picture abides for ever. I grant you; yet you can say no more of Hunt's primrose. After all, it is but a substitute for the flower, and as a substitute happens to remind you of pleasant things. But there are hundreds, city-born, or men like Conington, whom it reminds of nothing. Now the poem speaks to all of these, is more imperishable than the flower, and is just as suggestive of spring days. Moreover, those who see

nothing in a flower get no instruction from the picture ; from the poem they are taught to love flowers, to see more in them than they saw before, at least are thrilled by the poet's moral.

I would give a by-word to the spirit of criticism. While looking at a picture of the Sun god, the critic may say, his muscles are too large, or his throat is too fat. ' Goodness ! what does that matter now ? ' I cry ; ' I am trying to understand how Raphael has conceived the Phœbus Apollo, the Greek god, the fiery shooter of sunbeams.' Every boy who has gone through his first course of anatomy knows that Raphael, or the engraver of his pictures, has made the neck and muscles wrong. Go to the poetry, the soul, seek the important things ; don't tithe your mint and cummin, and forget the weightier matters of the law. So of Claude. The critic sees Radicofani, Cecilia Metella's tomb, a wood, a river, the sea, some Roman soldiers on a bridge, the ruins of the Claudian aqueduct, seaweedy trees, and leather dock-leaves, all in one picture. At these he turns up his nose, instructed by Ruskin and the spirit of the nineteenth century. But the poem has escaped him, the large peace, the bounteous air, the melody of afternoon. Yet Claude has lived three centuries, and will live. Our grandchildren, who will know even better than ourselves all about anachronisms, and the way to paint trees and docks, will still admire Claude. Technical accuracy will seem to them so trivial and easy and methodical, that they will forget that Claude did not possess it, lost still in admiration of his sweetness. I do not mean to say that criticism is not right, that Ruskin is not right, to explain his defects in order to purify style and break down what is pernicious in long-established models. But, having once learned the lesson, let us be humble ; seeking beauties rather than defects ; acknowledging Claude's childishness, or Blake's extravagant sins against anatomy and good taste—and trying to grasp the spirit of poetry which lies above and beyond, and in spite of these material defects. It is the privilege of the educated to ignore defects, or rather to make allowance for defects without danger. The imperfectly educated cannot afford to do so ; they must throw away wheat and chaff together for fear of mistaking

chaff for wheat. So none but the purest models should be given to students. But having learned, we are able to part and prove, and say, 'This is good in feeling, and, allowing for its technical defects, a work of genius'; or, 'This is faultily faultless, correct, but adds nothing to our ideas.'

But, after all, there are very few poems made in the world, very few to be made. We are most happy if we feel a poem once in four months, and thrice happier if we can succeed in executing it, however imperfectly. The only duty is to try, to try hard, ceaselessly. And this trying is so difficult—it ends almost always in wishing. We are like men who sit at a window and want to get far away to a hill-top; there they sit and look, and seem to forget that the hill-top can only be reached by walking—or, like those who beat their breasts and long for salvation, but do not go into the convent and fast, and pray, and watch, and scourge themselves. I know this—how hard it is to improve my style, to get fresh keenness of insight, and more gravity of judgment, to purge away my affectations, to brace up my language, to base my criticisms on more fixed foundations. The only way is never to neglect the question, to turn it over in the mind, to think often 'how can I do better?' That asking 'how' is of some good—one day one side light, another day another side light comes. And, after all, if you die with unaccomplished aims, and a name written on water, it does not matter. To have felt poems, to have striven for expression, to have done your best, that is something.

[The stimulus of the Alps, and above all, the delight in Macugnaga—'a place where happiness has come upon us, we might almost say unawares,' is made sufficiently clear in the joyous, vigorous, dithyrambic pages of the Macugnaga journal. But it had to come to an end. The Symonds left on June 17th, and went by Ivrea to Courmayeur, and thence by Aosta over the St. Bernard to Ouchy, and finally to Mürren. There, in a place which had proved of such importance in his life, Symonds, as was very usual with him, takes stock of his position. 'It is dangerous to revisit places which we have loved very

deeply, and at critical times of life. I felt this for a moment here, but yesterday Mürren reassumed all its own power. I find it hard to write about the mixed emotions which possess me; but one thing is clear—in three years I have grown older, stronger, steadier, more contented, happier. I am neither so dejected nor yet so ambitiously expectant as I was then. If I consider what I have gained in point of knowledge and intellectual power during these three years, I find it nothing. But my views of life are more settled and defined. I wish that I could command poetry: oh, how deeply, fervently I wish it. Then I might speak out somewhat of that which is within me.’ In this important passage Symonds takes a characteristically modest view of his intellectual achievement so far. Writing towards the close of his life, however, he judges this period more liberally and more justly; he recognises that the year 1866–67 was ‘important for my literary development. I did a great deal of careful, yet instructive work, which helped to form my style.’ And he approached the three main subjects which were to be the field of his literary labours, Italian history, Greek poetry, and Elizabethan Drama.

But the passage just cited is of higher moment in the delineation of Symonds’s intellectual and spiritual attitude, for it shows us his major desire in the field of literature to be a poet, to express what he had to say, not in the form of critical analysis, but in the guise of creative art—and it indicated expressly, for the first time, that strong conviction which governed the whole of his career, that life is more than literature. In the chapter wherein Symonds sums up his literary achievement, it will be seen to what extent the desire to be an artist, and the doctrine that life is more than literature, crossed, thwarted, hampered each other. The whole attitude is, indeed, highly characteristic of the man. He wished to be and to do everything; to be a poet, to be a critic, to be a student; to live a life of action, to live a life of pleasure; to know whatever has been known by men, to see, as he says, ‘*I vizi umani ed i dolori*’—an attitude which he used to sum up in the one word—curiosity.

This memorable journey ended intellectually in a second

reading of 'Ecce Homo,' and a critique on the nature of faith; emotionally, with these words, 'I am writing within sound of the lapping Lake of Neuchâtel—on the last verge of Switzerland. I love Switzerland as a second home—hoping to return to it, certain that I am happier, purer in mind, healthier in body there than anywhere else in the world. I would not take Rome, Florence, and Naples in exchange for the chalets of Mürren.']

## CHAPTER VIII

## MANHOOD—SPECULATIVE LIFE

Return to London—On method in writing poetry—Visits to Rugby and Oxford—Visit to Clifton—Bad health—Goes abroad with his sister—Rouen—St. Ouen—*Saxifraga pyramidalis*—The Columbine—On Gothic architecture—Norman buildings—St. Etienne at Caen—Bayeux—Depression—St. Lo—Coutances—His philosophy—His religion—Mont St. Michel—Emotional strain—Returns to England—Ill health—Mr. Henry Sidgwick—Writes poetry—Longing for the Alps—The necessary conditions of life—Speculations on life.

[THE house in Norfolk Square was not a favourite with either Mr. or Mrs. Symonds. They had lived so little in it, that it had never acquired the atmosphere of home. They reached it on August 24, 1866, and the *malaise* of London settled down again upon Symonds, and showed itself in such remarks as these—‘To some men God’s gifts come like dew and sunshine; whatever good others obtain is pressed from them by upbraidings of conscience and throes of self-condemnation and anguish, of self-disdain and jealousy and discontent.’ As these phrases will probably indicate to those who knew him, Symonds was, at this time, writing a considerable amount of poetry as well as prose, and this important passage on method occurs—‘When engaged on a subject it is good to throw off casual jottings, and short essays, *infimæ species*, as it were, in the order of composition. These ought, however, to be frequently inspected, so that their results may be wrought into unity; in time a number of preliminary syntheses, *media axiomata*, would thus be gained, and all lead up to the organic view. This, at least, is the idea of my method. Another way would be to keep all in solution in the mind until the final



process of crystallisation. No doubt this would be the most vigorous and artistic way.'

The London life was varied by visits to Rugby—of which there is a glowing account—and to Balliol, where, on his arrival, he finds Jowett 'half asleep on two chairs in the dusk'; with Jowett he discusses the idea of a 'History of the Renaissance in England.' The Diary of these visits closes thus: 'These swallow flights ventilate my thoughts; and the concussion of ideas with Arthur [Sidgwick], Jowett, Green, adds to their depth, rapidity, and freshness.']

In<sup>1</sup> March, 1867, at Clifton, I caught a bad cold, from which I did not recover easily. Nevertheless, we went back to 47 Norfolk Square. My father was so anxious about my state of health—I was suffering from the chronic trouble in my head, a permanent *malaise* and nervous sensibility, which made me incapable of steady work, together with the sub-acute pneumonia in the left lung—that he thought it best to send me off upon a journey at the end of May. My wife was unable to travel, expecting her second confinement in a few months. So my sister Charlotte kindly volunteered to bear me company; and very good company she was during our ramblings in Normandy. 1867.

I find a collection of letters written to my wife upon this tour, parts of which she copied out into a MS. book. From these I mean now to make extracts. They clearly indicate the state of my mind and emotion at that epoch.

ROUEN, *May* 29, 1867.—I never really enjoy a cathedral without music. It seems to set the mute hymns of the arches and the clustered piers to melody, to interpret the stories of the blazoned windows, and to fill the spaces of the aisles with invisible presences. Without this living accompaniment and commentary, architecture seems to me cold and dead. Are the harmonic ratios of form and sound really so sympathetic as mutually to elucidate each other? Or is it a matter of association—the religious purpose and solemn character of organ music tuning our mind to the proper key for comprehending sacred architecture?

<sup>1</sup> Autobiography.

The church of St. Ouen might be almost called provokingly perfect—a full-sized, elaborately-designed Gothic cathedral, finished on one plan down to its minutest details. Some of the romance of old church building is lost by this completeness. The precise way in which it has been isolated from surrounding houses, and planted at one end with pleasant trees, destroys the pathos of the picturesque. Nothing is left to the imagination. But, for gaining an insight into the working of the mediæval brains which planned these structures, St. Ouen is invaluable. Here the veriest child can see that the spirit of Gothic art is not anarchy, but symmetry and order. Only the parts here forced into correspondence are almost infinite—not, as in the case of Greek work, select and few.

While I am writing, the curfew is tolling over the town—a fine, deep, melancholy bell—and the towers of Notre-Dame, just now so rosy, are fading like the Alps at sunset into a dead greyness. Like the Alps! it does not do to think too much about them. Alas, I know that health is awaiting me there if only I could get to them. It is pitiable to be so much feebler than I was this time last year. Where were we then? At Macugnaga, reading Sainte-Beuve's 'Causeries de Lundi,' under the scarcely fledged beech boughs, within sight of melting avalanches fringed by crocuses and soldanellas.

*May 30.*—This morning (Feast of the Ascension) we heard service in three churches. There seems to be a renaissance of old, dry, ecclesiastical music in France, as elsewhere. It fills me with infinite sadness to stand in one of these naves, and to hear these reiterated adorations and supplications, and to think of the hundreds and thousands of colossal temples of the past—Egypt and furthest Ind, the deserts of Palmyra and Baalbec, Persia and China, and the tangled forests of Mexico—not to speak of Judæa and Phœnicia and Greece and Carthage and Italy, nor of all the regions of the north—fruitless altars and vain prayer-stations, raised to the inscrutable, unapproachable God, the sphinx of Being called by a myriad names. Those rites have vanished—the voices of the priests and chanting choirs are silent—the barbaric bands are mute—the prayers are forgotten—the ceremonies have ceased. Only our form of

worship still exists for us—for us ‘the foremost nation of the world’—for us who think ourselves so wise, and dream our creed the final one. Our particular small faith still lives, destined ere long to be merged in other equally impotent attempts to reach the source of aspirations.

I do not sleep much. Below my fourth-floor window are roofs of all colours, jumbled up in all ways, flowers growing on the sills of dormer windows, cats asleep; above all, the cathedral and its booming bell.

CAEN, *May 31*.—Yesterday, while we were walking in the flower-market at Rouen, something brought you [his wife] vividly to my mind. I saw five or six pots in one stall, holding what plant, do you think? Our great saxifrage.<sup>1</sup> Yes, there it was, with its plume of flowers and cushion of green leaves. But the wonderful wild thing had been tamed by cultivation. The leaves were more numerous, and sprawled asunder; the blossoms were whiter and less fantastically thick upon the sprays; the stalk itself had a duller, greyer hue. To complete the poor plant’s slavery, it was trained upright along a stick, which the woman who sold it called a ‘tuteur.’ Horrid pedagogic name. I tried to tell her of the black gorges and river banks and windy waterfalls where we had seen it last year.<sup>2</sup> Curiously enough, there were several large tiger-lilies in bloom by the side of the saxifrage; so that all Varallo and the Val Anzasca seemed to have been tamed and travestied together in in that prosy Rouen flower-stall.

If I had to choose a flower, I think I should take the columbine. It is so wonderfully finished in all its details, both of leaves and blossom, so graceful in carriage, so varied in colour, so perfect in drawing. Then the associations I have with it are many. Luini’s picture at Milan, the foreground of Titian’s ‘Bacchus and Ariadne’ in our gallery, the dark-brown garnet-coloured beauties of San Salvatore, the white ones of the Colma, the lilac flowers in Leigh Woods.

The columbine has started me on sad reflections. If there were but only one strong and perfect thing in me I should feel

<sup>1</sup> *Saxifraga pyramidalis*, of which Symonds was particularly fond.

<sup>2</sup> In Val Anzasca.

worthier ; I might perhaps let youth ebb away, and weakness get the upper hand more contentedly ; but when I regard my past life, I find so many broken arcs and no full circle : so much ignoble selfishness and the folly of sentimental ideality ; at the same time, such vulgarity of soul, cunning, want of faith in the highest things, that I am ready to sit down and cry for my futility. I am brought very low indeed now, stretching out my hands and praying that this perpetual weakness of the body, and this weary mental suffering, may not quench my best chance of rising to nobler things through life.

CAEN, *June 1.*—This is a pretty little place, more homely and friendly than Rouen, with several interesting churches. Caen stone is of a pure rich white—in tone and colour like our Bath stone, but harder in grain. It takes a pleasant mellowing with age, so that the houses are not so dead-grey as those of Bath. The town, too, is planted with avenues of limes just coming into flower, which clasp the grim Norman turrets in greenery and fragrance.

It seems almost incredible that the Normans, the Germans, and the Italians—to omit other nations, Flemish, Spanish, &c.—should have started from Romanesque as their common point, and have run a parallel course upon the same lines to similar conclusions, during the same period of time. What we call the Gothic style, emerging from the Romanesque, seems to have been developed independently by each people, obeying one law of growth, and to have passed through the same successive stages, in each case exhibiting the specific genius of the race, together with the general characteristics of the type. It would be interesting to analyse this matter in detail, and to discover, if that were possible, what caused this simultaneous progress from the Early Pointed to the Decorative manner, and from the Decorative to the Decadent, until the style was thoroughly worked out. Perhaps the last stage in the evolution of Gothic would be the most instructive in its bearing upon national character. We might select the formal cross-bars and perpendicular lines of St. Mary Redclyffe, or the flattened roof of King's College Chapel, the sinuous and

flame-like traceries of the façade of Notre-Dame at Rouen, the exquisitely graceful classic foliage of Siena, the thorny intricacies of the Nürnberg Lorenz-Kirche, the vicious scrolls and writhing lines of the town-halls at Ghent and Louvain. I am sure that the last chapter in the history of Gothic architecture, arrived at in each case upon a line of parallel progression, in each inevitable, and determined by the previous stages of the art, reveals a deeply-rooted national quality of genius: English prosiness and common-sense—French subtlety and plasticity—Italian feeling for decorative beauty and the classic past—German grotesqueness and idealising symbolism—Belgian *bourgeoisie* and prosperous comfort. But this would involve long studies, and technical acquirements, philosophical analysis. I cannot hope to undertake it. I must content myself with throwing out an *aperçu*.

I do not feel as though I knew enough about the Normans, or had enough sympathy with what I do know, properly to appreciate the rude vigour and pride of strength in their great churches here. The forms of Romanesque in Italy—Lombard façades, Tuscan pilastered rows of shallow galleries ascending to a peak, slumberous memories of decadent Papal and rudimentary Christian culture blent upon the Adriatic coast, mosaics and marble panellings—they seem to me nearer than these spruce, perfectly correct, humanly repellent structures, which, in an odd sort of way, remind me of the Prussian Government.

St. Etienne is very simple. Its barren towers are so grand, the interior is so impressive, that I am subdued by the exhibition of pure mental force and character. Charm has not to be demanded. We feel that the sons of the old Norsemen knew not the graces, or else that they refused to pay them homage. The tale of the Niblungs, the story of Gudrun, survive in these churches. Humanity is left to freeze and suffer, or to expand, according as it can—but mostly in a tragic way—among such art surroundings; just as it does amid bleak unsympathetic nature.

What most attracted me at St. Etienne was the structure of the towers; tall, fearless, square towers surmounted by beautifully shaped pyramids, and flanked with smaller turrets



of the same spiry form. This ground idea, which is feebly carried out in our Oxford Cathedral, serves for a distinctive mark of the Caen churches.

BAYEUX, *June 2*.—We came here to see the tapestry and the cathedral. We have seen them. One cathedral does not differ much from another, except to the antiquary. I hope I shall never come to say that one mountain does not differ much from another, except to the geologist. Nature increases, art diminishes, as we grow older.

I cannot guess what so subtle poison it is that has passed imperceptibly into me, and sucks out all my force. It is terrible to face the prospect of a languid inadequate life of enforced idleness. You speak about my becoming, after all, a strong man. That may be. It may even be that I shall strangle ambition in myself, give up the desire to do and be something, acquiesce in letting the years slip by in peace until the peace of death comes. At present I am plagued by the constant desire to use my brains for work, to store up knowledge for future writings—baffled by the terrible incapacity of a naturally weak constitution, and health broken by mismanagement. I am twenty-six years of age this summer; I have for all intents and purposes been idle during the last three years, those years in which I ought to have acquired stores of useful knowledge; and my enforced idleness has been an idleness of pain and illness. Are we to look forward to endless ‘peregrinities,’ and the lingering death of me after some few years more of flitting to and fro consumptively?

ST. LO, *June 3*.—I did not do Bayeux justice. On a second visit to the cathedral, by dint of staying there in quiet for two hours, I harmonised my mind to its severe and heaven-aspiring beauty. This church has the bloom and freshness of adolescence; the strength of the old Norman with the delicacy and luxuriant loveliness of early Gothic. The huge round arches of the nave are adorned with diapers and traceries, not yet formed into flowers or foliage, but rich like figured brocades. The transept and the choir expand into the beauty of clustered columns, soaring to a vast height, and feathering with fantastic leafage, while the long pointed windows of



clerestory and chapel hold wheels, cut into hexagons and quatrefoils by pure crisp cusps, the very models of expanded summer blossoms.

Of all the places I have seen this journey, St. Lo appears to me most capable of picturesque description. It stands on a hill of solid grey rock overhanging the Vire, a stream not unlike our Avon, which winds through wooded slopes of dark red ironstone and limestone, curving a gentle course towards the open plains and the not far distant sea. The valley, the river, the woods, the gardens on the hill-slopes, and the richly-meadowed land beyond, can all be surveyed from the cathedral square.

This Val de Vire was one of the most favoured regions of old Normandy. Here a local poetry flourished, not altogether unlike that of the Provençals, a lyric poetry of spring and love and flowers, with interludes of martial clangour. For England was close at hand. You hear plenty about the English in the songs of Val de Vire.

I have bought a collection of fourteenth and fifteenth century songs of this country, the Cotentin and Val de Vire. If, after reading them, I find they have sufficient substance, I may write something about the town and its poets.

*June 3.*—In Coutances I have at last received a true and profound impression from architecture. The cathedral is superb; moreover, it is not ‘swept and garnished,’ but still remains in its time-honoured state of cobwebs, dust, and green mildew. The windows are labyrinths of blue and crimson, not tapestried in gigantic pictures like the clerestories of Rheims, but broken into jewellery and sparks of passionate dyed flame. This is the kind of glass I love. There is some of the same sort at Strasburg. It is finer even than the glowing paradise of Florentine rose-windows, the one at S. Maria Novella, you remember.

A citizen of Coutances gave a large garden on the hill-slope to his townsfolk. It is laid out in terraces and walks. Before we found it out, we met two old women sitting on the steps of a church and gazing across the house roofs to the lands below. They had a young man with them, slender and graceful, with

a wistful look in his grey eyes, as though they were sweeping the horizon in search of something sweet and far away he had not yet discovered. Charlotte asked them where the public garden was. They rose at once to show us the way, and the young man sauntered at their side, half bold, half shy. A singularly magnetic youth, with a force in him 'eligible to break forth,' and only too ready to do so. The simplicity of the two old women, in their prim white caps and blue check gowns, formed a curious contrast to the passionate suppression of the boy, alert for adventures. I hummed to myself 'Non so più cosa son, cosa faccio.' They grinned from ear to ear. He, their son and nephew, as it turned out, kept appealing to me with his eyes, and asking mutely whether I too did not want something more than this. It was pleasant to see so much enjoyment of the simplest things in the old women, such gaiety and good humour, such kindly artless manners. Yet I fancy that they have their troubles. The mother told me she had only come to live in Coutances since *la dernière St-Michel*. Her husband was an old man of seventy-five; and her son had a fancy for the town, he was a young man, a *fils unique*, and this was his pleasure. Her sister still lived in the country. She became so sad at this point, and the lad lowered so disdainfully, that I changed the subject. However, I should have liked to know more about him. He must have a story; for his manners were excellent, and he knew some English, and his intelligence in seizing the *nuance* of what one said was perfect. These meetings with passing strangers, these magnetisms of one indifferent person by another, are among the strangest things in life. Well, when the conversation flagged between Charlotte and me and the old women, one of them would say, 'Ah, quelle heureuse rencontre! Nous nous étions là assises sur les marches de l'église. Nous nous attendions à rien. Et voilà que vous êtes venus. N'est-ce pas, François?' And François only smiled a little sadly. I, for my part, felt how idiotically human life is made. Charlotte delighted in the kindly, hale, hearty, sweet-tempered, plain-featured, innocent, hospitable, elderly old ladies. They liked the amusement of walking with two English tourists.

But the young man and I, we wanted to be comrades, if only for a day or two in passing—he to hear of my life, I of his. And things are so arranged that this may not be, though I cannot, for the soul of me, see why they should not be.

AVRANCHES, *June 4.*—We have had a day of diligences. This morning we left Coutances in the *intérieure* of a fusty old omnibus, which jolted us to Grouville—a curious port, built upon a mass of black granite projecting into the sea like a formless Monaco. The houses are of grey granite and black slate, sometimes whitened. That is all I remember of Grouville. Yet I carried another memory away, a thought rather than a recollection. It was a dreamy fancy of the many young men who have set forth from this port for distant voyages, for the fisheries, for Iceland perhaps, leaving their mothers and their sweethearts behind them, and some of them returning never, their beautiful strong bodies and white faces tossed to sleep on unfamiliar waves—the vast water-ways of the monstrous world, which Grouville surveys unmoved from her station on the sea-commanding promontory.<sup>1</sup>

I hope that this travelling does me good. I have more of animal spirits than I had. But the least noise keeps me awake, and we live in the midst of diligences. These paltry country places are more full of foolish bustle than London or Paris. Perhaps one attends to it more here. Perhaps it would be better for me if I could fraternise with the people, drink with them, and go to bed narcotised. The life of a mere brain-being is bad. I do not touch, or else I shrink from the coarse human nature round me. Yet I cannot say how I long to meet with a man, a comrade, the first face and hands responsive to my own. Why? I do not know. I hate the sophistication of my existence, the being penned up in a cage of archæology and literary picture-making. All this has nothing to do with the ties, inviolably sacred, which bind me to my home, and make me feel my centre there in you.

AVRANCHES, *June 5.*—You forecast the future far too much. For all the great occurrences of life I am strong enough; it is for the little things, the daily *ennui* of my tired

<sup>1</sup> *Pêcheur d'Islande* had not been published then.

brain and eyes, the helplessness and inability engendered by my state of health, that I feel myself feeble. We ought not to sit down like the German girl in the cellar, watching the hatchet which might some day fall on her, forgetting the ale that kept running from the cask.

No one is happy who has not a deep firm faith in some ideal far beyond this world, in some law of majesty, beauty, goodness, harmony, superior to the apparent meanness, ugliness, evil discord of the present dispensation. How difficult it is to live the life of the spirit thoroughly, to be permanently interested in the eternal things, the durable relations. This is why so many of us are not happy. I have a great deal of faith in my soul, vague, not reduced to a creed. But what I have sustains me in the obscuration of my energies. To this I owe my happy moments—to the support I draw from nature, books, and art—the imperishable thoughts of men, the everlasting mysteries and glories of the world—finally from that, whatever that is, which underlies all this, and is the real reality, the truth and unity of the whole. Those who are not ‘tenoned and morticed’ upon something indestructible, must be rendered wretched by the changefulness and barrenness of daily life. They may not know exactly that they are poor and miserable. Or they feel it vaguely, like the sullen Roman nobles, so magnificently painted for us by Lucretius, hurrying from one palace to another to escape the gloom of boredom. It is wonderful that we are at all contented with the transitory interests and trivial occupations which fill up the inexorable years—each year leading us, at so short a distance, to the bourne of death, and after death, if anything, then either endless change or continuity of eternal being. In either case the soul needs a refuge from the things that pass like a show, to some reality above them and beneath them. This I feel with all the force I have. The all but mortal blow which prostrated me three years ago, since when I have been like a clock suddenly stopped, marking the time with moving fingers no more, has taught me so much.

The misery of scepticism, of intellectual doubt, of wordliness, of mental indolence, and moral inactivity, consists in this—

that men have to suffer cares, ill-health, *ennui*, and often the greater evils of life, without a calming prospect, without any hope that the wrong will be made right, the broken pieces joined into a perfect whole hereafter. I verily believe that a robust vice, an energetic state of sinning, if it inspires confidence in some reality, is better than the condition of negation. If the world is to live without faith and to become conscious of the vanity of things—that is, if men take to seriously thinking upon the facts of this life without a religious trust in God—a simultaneous suicide might almost be expected. What people call pessimism—the philosophy of Schopenhauer, for example—implies and virtually professes this conclusion.

Is it the misfortune or the fault of folk in this age that they are so often denuded of belief in God—I mean of the personal and vividly-felt God of Christianity? No one can really doubt that some God animates the world. ‘*Quis Deus incertum: est Deus.*’ I have no living God in constant relation to myself, no father, no future host and friend and master in the immortal houses. At times this very disbelief appears to me as an illumination and a martyrdom, because I know that it has not been brought upon me by the desire to elude the law of God, and because it is actually painful. At other times I cannot maintain that attitude, when I consider how poor the purposes of my life, what difficulty I find in rising above trivial thoughts and passions. The ideal seems so far away from me. Compared with other people, I may not appear as sordid as I feel; but every man ought to compare himself with what he might be, with his own best self, before he thinks of applying the standard of other people.

In these difficulties I fall back on a kind of stoical mysticism—on the prayer of Cleanthes, the Proem to Goethe’s ‘*Gott und Welt*,’ the phrase of Faust, ‘*Entbehren sollst du, sollst entbehren*,’ the almost brutal optimism of Walt Whitman. I cry to the Cosmos, ‘*Though thou slay me, yet will I trust in thee.*’ Can a religion be constructed out of these elements? Not a tangible one, perhaps, nothing communicable to another heart. But a religious mood of mind may be engendered sufficient for the purpose of living not ignobly.



I have no will to sprawl contentedly, or the reverse, like the common herd and children. You shall see me die or become idiotic through *ennui* or soul-sickness first. It is not good for men to sprawl. Let us say :

‘ Je souffre ; il est trop tard ; le monde s’est fait vieux,  
Une immense espérance a traversé la terre ;  
Malgré nous vers le ciel il faut lever les yeux.’

Let us say this and make the best of it we can.

You and I together must be strong in the world ; be it what it is to be for us—or if we are weak, we are still together. I clench my fists, and refuse to be beaten. I gather strength in myself, when flung down to the lowest, and find wings in the futility of my nature. Pain, grief, despair raise men above the condition of dumb creatures and infants. There is a dignity in endurance.

Do not imagine that I am writing all this like a sermon on commonplaces. I am feeling it very intensely. For to-day has disappointed me much. I thought I was getting stronger. But two hours of real interest and keen attention at the Mont St. Michel brought back my worst brain-symptoms. I sat for half-an-hour on the steps of the monastery, quite stunned with mere nervous annihilation, staring at the stone-crop, hyssops, and lichens ; and the drive back to Avranches was very doleful. Grievous to have the very mainspring of all sensations and thoughts broken.

AVRANCHES, *June 6*.—It was well that we went to Mont St. Michel yesterday. To-day the rain descends in deluges, and I shall employ my time in writing an account of one of the most impressive places I have ever visited. I am afraid that I cannot do justice to my own impressions. The wretchedness of yesterday still lasts, though it has abated more quickly than I could have hoped for in London.

This letter has been the work of a long wet day. Tired as I am, I feel the better for writing myself out. Had I not written, the details of the Mount would have vanished from my memory after some years. Nothing would have remained but



the moment of pain when I sat exhausted on those granite steps, and stared at the stonecrop, after trying to comprehend and feel too much. What I have done by writing has only this value—that I have been talking to you, and resisting my besetting weakness. We must make the machine of the brain go. It does not do to let it stop. Whatever happens, energise—even if the result be only like a diluted page of Murray's Handbook. This, by the way, I have not with me; and what I have said about Mont St. Michel is probably wrong in a multitude of details. 'Mir-ist's gleich,' as the Germans say. Clumsily, heavily, I have recorded my impression, and put pressure upon myself.

CHARTRES, *June 9*.—It is a blessing to be fond of books. They are a resource and a relief when all else fails. I wish you understood what it is to make a friend of such a book as the 'Divine Comedy.' Nature is more refreshing; but you cannot always have recourse to her consolations. I repeat what I said before, that nature becomes more to me and art less. This is the secret of Walt Whitman's influence over my mind. I do not quite know what you mean by art requiring an effort. All great things make demands upon our sympathies and our intelligence: none more than grand landscape, which, I believe, requires a long and patient apprenticeship for its comprehension. So do great characters, great statues, great buildings, great symphonies, great pictures. I suppose it was the effort you speak about which broke me down at Mont St. Michel.

'We must, if I come to Hastings, try to sit together by the sea and be quiet.'

On the whole, I returned to England worse than I went. Such a fortnight was enough to fatigue any one. Not only did I try to feel and understand everything I saw, but I scrutinised my own soul at every spare moment.

After a short visit to Hastings, where we stayed until June 23, we returned to London, and lived at 47 Norfolk Square. I could not shake the lung-mischief or the brain-weariness off; but grew worse and worse during the hot weeks, panting continually to be in Switzerland.

Henry Sidgwick, whose acquaintance I had recently made, was also staying in London, philosophising, going to spiritualistic séances, and trying to support himself (for an experiment) on the minimum of daily outlay. Our acquaintance ripened rapidly into a deep and close friendship, which has been to me of inestimable value during the last twenty-two years. It would be difficult to say how much I owe to the rarely noble character, the wisdom, the mental originality, the inexhaustible sympathy and kindness of this most remarkable man.

This summer and the year that followed were of such importance in my life, that I must relate the incidents in some detail, and illustrate them by extracts from note-books and letters in my possession.

I began writing poetry again during the hot summer weather. The second half of 'John Mordan,' 'Diego,' 'Love and Music,' 'The Headmaster,' together with a great number of dithyrambic pieces in the style of Walt Whitman, belong to those months. Yet I find myself constantly doubting my own literary faculties.

'Art is very long. I have not yet vigour of nerve enough to give to composition that patient and incessant application which results in form. I have the molten fluid in my soul; but the strength to fashion the mould for it is wanting.'

'Whether I am a poet or not, I am haunted by certain situations and moral tragedies which demand expression from me. I suppose that this arises from what I have myself suffered in the past—emotional distress that has indelibly impressed my nature, and which reproduces itself in the shape of dreams or dreamlike images. Long ago I crushed the tendency to write these situations into poetry, as being injurious to my health of mind and body. Besides, I had no belief in my artistic faculty. Yet, for all this, the tendency to do so remains and gathers force; the ideas have never left my mind, but have acquired distinctness and durability with my growth.'

'There is a passive and an active imagination. The one creates, the other sympathises. The one makes new things for the world, the other appropriates whatever has been made, informing the past with something of fresh life. To men who

are not in a true sense artists, it is a solace thus to retrace the history of the world. Like Dürer's 'Melancholy,' they sit brooding, their minds a mirror, their wings down-drooping, their arms sinewless, their back unbraced.'

No wonder I grew weaker and more ill. It was my one craving to be off to Switzerland. Instinct told me I should regain health there; for since those weeks I passed at Mürren, in the year 1863, I had never failed to feel a peculiar well-being among the mountains. This craving expressed itself in dithyrambic incoherent prose.

'In London, when I rise in the morning, and go to bed at night; walking the streets and squares, deafened by the roar and dazzled by their movement; when I pace the hot hard flags, or sit beneath the blackened branches of the trees; when the bricks at night give out their stifling odours, and the breathless dawn goes forth through over-burdened air; when the passing crowds confuse me, and wretched faces, under wet lamps, make me sick; when the canopy of tawny smoke is stretched all night above the noise and sin and worry of the house-roofs; but mostly while I lie awake and listen to my laboured breathing—the thunder of the town is heard outside, the gaslight slants sideways through the window-chink, there is quarrelling and singing in a public-house hard by. But before daybreak all is still, and the leaden-hearted morning, sick and sorry, climbs the jaded sky—then, mostly then, do I fly away on wings of thought to Switzerland. In my yearning I exclaim: "Now creeps the rose of dawning down the snows of Monte Rosa. A solitary watchman rings the dawn bell in the church tower. Light mist lies along the flowers and streams—the glacier rills have not begun to flow. Silently the glory of the sunrise floods the snowfields; the blue behind them glows into violet; the rose-bloom rises to gold, and, after gold, the saffron and the white light of the morning come." I turn on my pillow and clasp my hands, but shed no tears, and find no rest. It is of no use. I try to put these thoughts aside, but they come crowding back again. "In the majesty and simplicity of the high mountains there is peace. The mowers go to their labour over shadowy lawns. The goat-herds and

the cow-herds, who have seen the stars fade through the roof-chinks of their *châlets*, lead their flocks afield. The dews dry upon the flowers, the rills begin to trickle, from the valley rise up fleecy mists and melt into the air." Then I remind myself that the mountains are not always so idyllic, and that I have not always been happy or at rest among them. "Well am I reminded of these things. I have not forgotten the misery of Engelberg, the anguish on the Brünli, the self-abandonment of grief at Unterseen. Pitiless are the everlasting hills in their unsympathetic sunlight and sarcastic splendour, their imperial immobility, inaccessibility, indifference to life, their cruelty and wastefulness and never-ending dying. Inexorable are they as nature's laws. The stars at night are not more cold, the earth's rotation is not less friendly." And so I vainly interpose a little censure of my own ideal. It is of no use. I love the mountains as I love the majesty of justice. I adore God through them, and feel near to Him among them. I cannot breathe in this city.'

I very rightly connected my present discomfort with past experience of sorrow and repression. But I did not know how to cure myself. Perhaps I could not just then have cured myself in any way except the way I wanted—change of scene, return to the vital Alpine atmosphere. I find myself writing thus to Henry Sidgwick :

'Now that you are gone, and I am not to see you again until we meet in the dim distance of the Riviera, I feel that much which I have told you about myself must seem painful. My past life has been painful in many ways, and I bear in my body the marks of what I have suffered. With you, with my wife, with friends like Arthur and Graham, or when I am writing verses, I can treat those troubles of memory with cheerfulness. But at times, when my nervous light burns low in solitude, then the shadows of the past gather round, and I feel that life itself is darkened. Oppressed thus, I am often numb and callous ; all virtue seems to have gone out of me, the spring of life to have faded, its bloom to have been rudely rubbed away. I dread that art and poetry and nature are unable to do more for what Dante, with terrible truth, called

“*Li mal protesti nervi.*” These darknesses, which Arthur calls my depression fits, assail me in splendid scenery, among pictures and statues, wherever, in fact, I ought to enjoy most and be *most alive*. It is only the intercourse of friends which does me really any good.’

Large portions of these diaries and note-books from which I am now quoting, consist of criticisms, reflections upon art, religion, morals, proving that, despite of so much physical and mental *malaise*, I was forming my own mind.

“*Im Ganzen Guten Schönen resolut zu leben,*” “To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” How much simpler is the latter phrase ! It looks like a motto for children. But how much larger, really sounder is the former. It is large as the world, a motto for adult souls. We cannot in this age believe that St. Paul’s utterance is the whole truth. We cannot burn our books like the Ephesians ; we ought not probably to sell our goods and give to the poor. Those were impulses of incipient faith. We have now to co-ordinate ourselves to what is, and accept the teaching of the ages.’

‘What is left for us modern men ? We cannot be Greek now. The ages and the seasons of humanity do not repeat themselves. The cypress of knowledge springs, and withers when it comes in sight of Troy ; the cypress of pleasure likewise, if it has not died already at the root of cankering Calvinism ; the cypress of religion is tottering, the axe is laid close to its venerable stem. What is left ? Science, for those who are scientific. Art, for artists ; and all literary men are artists in a way. But Science falls not to the lot of all. Art is hardly worth pursuing now, so bad are the times we live in for its exercise, so faulty our ideas, so far more excellent the clear bright atmosphere of antique Hellas. What, then, is left ? *Hasheesh*, I think ; *hasheesh*, of one sort or another. We can dull the pangs of the present by living the past again in reveries or learned studies, by illusions of the fancy and a life of self-indulgent dreaming. Take down the perfumed scrolls ; open, unroll, peruse, digest, intoxicate your spirit with the flavour. Behold, there is the Athens of Plato in your narcotic visions ; Buddha and his anchorites appear ; the



raptures of St. Francis, and the fire-oblations of St. Dominic; the phantasms of mythologies, the birth-throes of religions, the neurotism of chivalry, the passion of past poems; all pass before you in your Maya-world of hasheesh, which is criticism. And Music? Ah, that is the best anodyne of all. But, alas, not even slumbers of the critic and dreams of the music-lover are undisturbed by anguish. The world weighs on us. Nature and conscience cry: "Work, while it is yet day; the night cometh when no man can work." Heaven goads us with infinity of secrets and torments of innumerable stars. The spirit thrills us with its chidings. Hasheesh is good for a season, *faute de mieux*. But this is no solution of the problem. Criticism, study, history, artistic pleasure will not satisfy the soul. "Therefore to whom turn I but to thee the ineffable name?" Ever onward toward infinity I voyage, demanding only what is permanent, imperishable in the world of reality.'

'Drudgery, too, is a kind of goddess, worthy of worship for the gifts she gives ungrudgingly. A Cinderella-sister of Semnai Theai is she, clad in homespun, occupied with saucepans, sweeping up man's habitation, a besom in her horny hands. She is accessible, and always to be found. The anodyne of fatigue is in the greasy leather wallet at her girdle. All men should pay vows at her shrine, else they will surely suffer.

'I wonder what morality is; whether eternal justice exists, immutable right and wrong, or whether law and custom rule the world of humanity, evolved for social convenience from primal savagery. I am led in my actions by impulse, admiration, regard for the opinion of my fellows, fear of consequences, desire for what in moments of happiness I have recognised as beautiful, dislike of what is vile, mistrust of low and impious men, but never by fixed principles. I do not know what these are, and I very much doubt whether any one is guided by them. I pardon a vice for its sister virtue's sake. I feel coldly toward a virtue because of its stolid insipidity.'



## CHAPTER IX

## MANHOOD—A SPECULATIVE CRISIS

Birth of second child—Leaves Norfolk Square—The speculative Abyss—On Music, to Mr. Henry Sidgwick—Goes abroad—Glion—Provence—The Riviera—At Cannes—On writing poetry—On Richardson and Balzac—Misery at Cannes—A crisis—Journey to Corsica—Adventures—Bologna to Venice—On Tennyson's 'Lucretius'—On Scepticism—Returns home—Settles at 7 Victoria Square, Clifton.

[ON the 30th of July 1867 a second daughter was born, and soon afterwards the Symonds left London, never to return to 47 Norfolk Square for residence.

The fascination of the Absolute, the way in which Symonds was pressing forward to the verge of speculative possibilities, is indicated in the following extracts from his letters :]

'I<sup>1</sup> seem to enter into a kind of Nirvana, thinking of mutability and youth that flows away—until the senses slip off one by one, and thoughts slumber, and the conscious soul at last stands naked and alone, environed by eternal silence and everlasting nothingness. It is the glacial region of the soul, the death of all that warms or makes to move, the absolute indifference to pain or pleasure, of what is or what is not. From it I bring no message—none at least that can be said in words—but such a message as makes me feel what are the solitudes of the womb and of the grave. No doubt this state is—of the nerves—morbid; but what does it not reveal to me of the uncoloured, universal I?'

[Here the emotional side of this speculative audacity seems to be expressed in language which we might have looked for

<sup>1</sup> To Arthur Sidgwick. 47 Norfolk Square, Nov. 18, 1866.

in the mouth of a mediæval mystic, a Tauler or an Eckhart ; the fascination of the abyss, 'l'abysme qui abysme en désabysmant,' is acknowledged.

On the other hand, the intellectual aspect of this same emotion appears in the following letter to Mr. Henry Sidgwick :]

'I<sup>1</sup> am not sure what you mean about the "feeble failure" of the man who is in advance of his age. To be a Moses upon Pisgah is not a "feeble failure." Nay, it is about the best thing which one who believes in progress can at this moment hope for. At all events, I feel, let us not acquiesce in anything but Wholes ; let us feebly gasp, or powerfully bear, displaying strength in our weakness ; until the Whole is made clear to us. If it never is in this life revealed, *n'importe*. There are plenty more men to come, and nature is prodigal of her dear ones ; "And what is our failure here but a triumph's evidence, for the fulness of the days ?" as Browning says.

'By the way, the poem from which I have just quoted, contains a line which applies to what I feel about *Versöhnung*. He makes Abt Vogler exclaim, "The rest may reason and welcome, 'tis we musicians know." When I thought over works of art which have *Versöhnung*, I came back and back again to music. After reading a tragedy, or experiencing some mental conflict, or reflecting on the *misères* of the commonplace and the miseries of an agitated existence, I feel a great symphony or an organ voluntary can alone present the perfect reconciliation. "Where words end music begins" is a proverb, never more true than in this application. The next thing to it, as a means of expressing *Versöhnung*, is nature—the wet, tired, calm, clear skies and woods, and rocks and rivers after a tempestuous day.

'The truest *Versöhnung* in art I know is to be found in Beethoven's C Minor Symphony. There he first posits all the contradiction of passions, aspirations, and sorrows, then combines them without losing their separate individualities ; but so transfiguring them that the termination is triumph ; the

<sup>1</sup> To H. Sidgwick. 47 Norfolk Square, Aug. 22, 1867.

victory and majesty of the soul are wrought out of its defeats and humiliations. Music alone can do this.

‘Milton has given us a *Versöhnung* in “Samson Agonistes.” The last chorus is very grand. But what the world desiderates now is not a concluding strophe of sublime resignation, but rather a trilogy, whereof the whole third part shall exhibit “the height, the space, the gloom, the glory,” of ultimate final and perfect *κάθαρσις*. And this as yet, I repeat, is only to be found in the C Minor Symphony, Music’s *chef d’œuvre*.’

On <sup>1</sup> the 4th of September, accompanied by Janet and her nurse and our man-servant James, we crossed the Channel, and went to sleep at Melun. During the night there, being unable to rest, I wrote the great part of a poem on Beethoven, called ‘A Violin Improvisation.’ <sup>2</sup> From Melun we proceeded to Dijon, and on the descent into the town I noticed, just before sunset, what I had only once or twice seen before, prismatic colours very faint and delicately graduated on the cirrus clouds above the sun. Their light and twisted strata shone like pearl-shells, while the clouds around were white upon a bright blue sky. On the 7th we entered Switzerland. It was a good time for tired brain, sore eyes, and injured lungs.

[The themes of the two letters just quoted, mysticism and music, are resumed in his letters to his friends.]

‘Your <sup>3</sup> squirrel moods gratify me immensely, for then, like Jaques, you are full of matter. My obliteration is proceeding quickly. There are four *οικέια κακά* from which I habitually suffer in the flesh—overworn nerves, weak eyes, delicate lungs, and a peculiar derangement of the digestive organs, which affects more subtle parts of the economy. All these are in a bunch upon me now, so that rest and beauty have but little meaning, and like the happy man in Aristotle, my chance of noble action consists in maintaining serenity amid a crowd of evils. I do not walk, and I cannot enjoy life. Yet for all this I scarcely think I would exchange with ——

<sup>1</sup> Autobiography.

<sup>2</sup> Published in ‘New and Old.’

<sup>3</sup> To H. Sidgwick. Rigi Vaudois, Sept. 20, 1867.

whose health, fulness and vigour both of mind and frame, are beautiful. I do not know how this is. I am far from being hectically fond of suffering and privation. I have, in some ways, had, and have, too much. Nor am I bitterly contemptuous. But it seems to me quite impossible to wish to be better off than I am in respect of mere circumstance. I feel my own to be one definite human situation, and am satisfied. It is only when the thought of a very early death occurs to me that I feel regretful. I have seen so little into the nature of anything here—I am so utterly blind to everything hereafter—love and life have so many flowers for me that I have not yet mortified myself into recognising a possible early death as part of this human situation, which I would not exchange. I hate diffusing the scent of the charnel. I am doing it, however, in this letter.

‘It is surprising what calm there is in suffering. After a time it becomes an angel and a companion. I do not marvel at the mystics enamoured of their scourge and sackcloth, especially as they had heaven in view and Christ to suffer for. My open blisters and wakeful nights cannot be reckoned to salvation, nor rise like a sweet savour to the cross. Yet they consecrate and tranquillise.

‘It is curious you should have thought of Beethoven. Our ideas coincide, for I make Beethoven triumph in transcendental faith. At first he resists the invitation of the Muse, then she seizes him, and the strokes of fate fall in massive chords. These yield to hidden recollections, which lead to rapid and ecstatic wanderings, broken by a sudden return of purely young and sensual pleasure—the delight of youth in woods. Here memory stirs the sense of present privation; the loneliness of deafness broods upon him, and his music groans. But the soul rears her crest again, and finds in grief the chariot for reaching heaven; the artist recognises in himself the hierophant of all the mysteries of human woe, and is content. Then I break his soliloquy abruptly. A few lines at the end describe how, as he improvised, his jangled violin made discords for all listening ears, his own soul hearing only spiritual harmonies.

‘The theme is good. In the expression I have sorely failed. It remains a grand subject for a true lyricist.’

[Symonds really enjoyed his sojourn in the Canton Vaud. In the *Autobiography* he writes :

‘When we left I made some notes about our pension life, which may be inserted here, if only to show that I was not incapable of healthy natural enjoyment.

‘We spent a very happy month. W. J. Courthope joined us. His thorough happiness in living is a great enjoyment to me, and the conversations we have had about literature were always interesting. I cannot remember when we had more fun and amusement together.’]

On <sup>1</sup> October 10 we came to Genoa.

By Grenoble, Avignon, Nismes, Arles, we travelled slowly in wet autumn weather, seeing much, and profiting by what we saw, till we came at last to Cannes upon October 24. Here we stayed until January 30, in 1868 ; and, while it has been my lot to pass many miserable weeks in various places, I can truly say that I never passed any so wretched as those. It was not that we were lonely. On the contrary, we had plenty of friends—my sister Lady Strachey and her family, Edward Lear the painter, Montagu Butler, the Otto Goldschmidts, Miss Helen Paget, and Mrs. Hawkes, with whom my wife was very intimate. Henry Sidgwick, too, came out from England, and paid us a long delightful visit. But, for some inscrutable reason, all my maladies became intense at Cannes. The nervous irritation amounted at times to insanity ; and at last I sprained an ankle very severely, which made matters worse, by preventing me from taking any exercise. There was no doctor at Cannes capable of treating a simple though bad sprain. Consequently, it assumed a chronic form. I had to go about on donkey-back, horse-back, or in carriages for the next seven months, and was only cured eventually by my father, when I got to Clifton.

<sup>1</sup> *Autobiography*.

‘I’ do not suppose you can understand what a painful thing it is to be without physical power—not to be able to use the eyes for assiduous study, or the head for that masculine contention of prolonged thought which gives birth to books. I am disheartened at everything I write. “What virile efforts, what effete results,” comes into my mind; for I am often conscious of a true sympathy with my subject, and a sort of intuition into it; but when I seek to express these in words the outcome is very inadequate. This makes me feel great admiration for men who obviously express the larger portion of what they have conceived, or, more accurately speaking, whose conceptions are so full and vast that one does not notice the unavoidable shortcomings of expression. All language, whatever our art may be, is a restraint on thought. It makes the thought or feeling less than what it was in the author’s mind. And so the idea which, when expressed, seems large, must, in the creator’s mind, have indeed been vast. I do not wonder at so many men being content to remain unvoiced, and to flatter themselves that they are poets or philosophers, who have not been moved to speak. I sometimes imagine that if I had force enough to work over and over again at expression I might produce more satisfactory results. But I dare not apply such “improbis labor.” My brain will not stand it. I lose my sleep. I am perplexed with obscure pressure on the top and front of the head. And this *Umarbeitung* cannot well be deferred until I have regained force. It is most effectual when the iron is yet hot, and the enthusiasm of the first conception remains plastic. Thus I am thrust by physical debility into the petty style. Yet even as it is, in this imperfect work, I derive the greatest possible pleasure from the contemplation of the great thoughts and splendid images presented to me, which I try to put into my own language, and for the moment feel assimilated to them.

‘Haydon used to say that the poorest sign-painter or house-dauber had his moments of inspiration, and with his forehead struck the stars, when conscious of a wash of colour smoothly

<sup>1</sup> To H. Sidgwick. Cannes, Nov. 17, 1867.



laid, or the perfections of a pure untroubled coating of grey paint.

‘My father has sent me out Buchanan on W. W.,<sup>1</sup> Harrison on Culture, and Swinburne’s Roman poem. Buchanan is sensible, but not deep. He says, *e.g.*, that after “Children of Adam” the verses of W. W. are vague and general. Yet “Calamus” comes after “Children of Adam,” the most remarkable part of the book, that in which W. W. says he reveals himself most. Harrison is good, jerky like himself, but keen. Swinburne more than usually verbose, and unhappy in his metre, which is a rare fault with him. He does not attend to the projection of his thought enough, but splashes it out as if he were upsetting a bucket.’

‘You<sup>2</sup> know it is crushing to be told that one has neither “force” nor “distinction,” nothing but “shady fluency” (Conington’s words).

‘I do not mind being told that I am not a poet. I believe that such poetical faculty as I have is restricted to the limpid but not artistic expression of a few strong feelings—to the painful sense of a few peculiar situations. But Conington’s verdict severs me from literature altogether. He who has neither “force” nor “distinction” had better keep silence. All this I used to feel acutely at Oxford, until I got golden words from Jowett, and breathed atmosphere never drawn by Conington—art, nature, philosophy, the literature of France and Germany and Italy, books sealed to him one and all.

‘Then I began to see that, as a critic, he is purely verbal, and that there is some defect of sensibility in him, probably connected with his want of sense for landscape, music, painting, sound, colour, form and life, in fact. I tested him with the Elizabethans, and when I found that he pooh-poohed Fletcher, was well content to be beneath his ban.

‘But I have a great respect for his judgment in matters of style, and his scrupulous impartiality, and it disheartened me to find that I could never get a scrap of commendation.

‘Now, if I did not feel the truth of much that he says, I

<sup>1</sup> Walt Whitman.

<sup>2</sup> To H. Sidgwick, October 1867.

should not say so much about it. But I do acknowledge my "shady fluency." I need nervousness of style, compression, and saliency. How to get it?—*Corpo di Bacco!* I will go on trying. I know not whether it is not better to die panting up Parnassus on the boulder-stones which clog its basement, than to sit bay-crowned upon the breezy turf above the clouds, with nothing but the sky overhead. Nothing will persuade me to seek distinction by cultivating mannerisms. I believe that purity is the true note of excellence. Distinction and force must be found in thought, and not in new words or strange combinations.

'I need guidance, and feel that I might work, if well counselled, to better purpose. My real grievance against Conington always has been that he has not thought it worth while to say *how* I might aim at superior excellence. Yet without this, adverse criticism, especially coming from a friend, is merely useless—depressing when the subject is weak, irritating when he feels himself strong.

'Please criticise me. I throw you as a *corpus vile* the article on Theocritean landscape, which is to appear in the "North British" of next month.'

'I<sup>1</sup> am laid up on a sofa, and have been so ever since Sunday afternoon, when I sprained my ankle out walking with Mr. Lear. I had to walk home nearly two miles after doing so, with a great deal of pain, and when I shall get on my legs again seems problematical. It is a nuisance, for Sidgwick will come some day this week, and I shall not be able to show him the country. I do not know how I came to twist my foot, these accidents happen so suddenly. I was running down hill among some brushwood to find a path, when I felt as if a knife had run through my foot and up into my leg, and I fell flat, quite helpless for some minutes. Mr. Lear, who is a whimsical punster, had only just before invented this sorry riddle: "Why is this hillside like an old-fashioned waistcoat?" "Because it's a little jerkin'." I had no notion I was to afford so painful an illustration of the conundrum's force.

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte. Cannes, January 1, 1868.

‘Miss Girard has not yet turned up here. Mme. G. promised to send her as soon as she had arrived and rested. I am anxious to see her, as she comes so fresh from Clifton. Among other things, too, I am impatient to get the book on Blake which papa is sending me. It is so hard to find readable English books at Cannes. C. and I were lately reduced, by way of experiment in literature, to attempt “Clarissa Harlowe.” It is like a deluge of very weak and lukewarm green tea, breakfast cup after breakfast cup. After the first of the four volumes, into which the Tauchnitz edition is divided, we gave way. I was much interested with Richardson’s method, and admired the particularity with which he puts his characters upon the canvas, and makes them live more in the smallest circumstances of daily life. By force of accumulated details they acquire fulness and reality. But when they come to act, when all the minutiae of their internal hesitations and emotions are insisted on with wearisome prolixity, one begins to feel that what one wants in Art is something other than the infinite particulars of life. Then Richardson, to my mind, is essentially a bourgeois, his imagination mediocre, his sentiment mawkish. The device which Clarissa invents for her own tombstone displays all these defects, a cockney kind of pathos and vulgarity of invention. It is curious that English novel-writers should number Richardson, Miss Austen, and Trollope: the excellences and defects of each of them so nearly the same, and so unlike those of any other nation’s novelists. Balzac in minuteness of details, and in the patient building up of character, resembles Richardson; but then Balzac is a poet also, animated with profound and tragic enthusiasms; he creates characters that serve for types of human nature, his colours are gorgeous, his scenery as vivid as a world of dreams. If he were not so fantastic, if he were less gross and cruel, if he could believe in anything, if life were not a hideous strife of interests in which the stronger tramples on the weak, if he did not love evil for its own sake, Balzac would certainly be one of the two greatest novelists of the world, Miss Evans the other. As it is, he must always be admired with reservations, and regarded as a ruthless pathologist. The higher place of a true

physiologist (such as I think Miss Evans is) cannot be claimed for him.'

All<sup>1</sup> the evil humours which were fermenting in my petty state of man—poignant and depressing memories of past troubles, physical maladies of nerve-substance and of lung-tissue, decompositions of habitual creeds, sentimental vapours, doubts about the existence of a moral basis to human life, thwarted intellectual activity, ambitions rudely checked by impotence—all these miserable factors of a wretched inner life, masked by appearances, the worse for me for being treated by the outside world as mere accidents of illness in a well-to-do and idle citizen, boiled up in a kind of devil's caldron during those last weeks at Cannes, and made existence hell. The crisis I passed through then was decisive for my future career. But I did not foresee the point to which it was about to lead me. I only knew for certain that I must change my course, and that I would never repeat, come what might, that infernal experience of the Riviera.

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Among my papers of that period, written after I had escaped from Cannes, is an incoherent document, from which I can quote certain passages, to prove how terrible the crisis had been. In another nature, acting under other influences, the phenomenon of what is called 'conversion' might have been exhibited. With me it was different. I emerged at last into stoical acceptance of my place in the world, combined with epicurean indulgence. Together, these two motives restored me to comparative health, gave me religion, and enabled me, in spite of broken nerves and diseased lungs, to do what I have done in literature. I am certain of this fact, and I regard the utter blackness of despair at Cannes as the midnight in which there lay a budding spiritual morrow.

'I contemplated suicide. But death is not acceptable—it offers no solution. I loathe myself, and turn in every direction to find strength. What I want is life; the source of life fails me. I try to rest upon my will and patience. Doing so, I faint; for there is no force in me to keep the resolves I

<sup>1</sup> Autobiography.

form, and no content to make me acquiesce in present circumstances. When I attempt to drown my self-scorn in mental work, my nerves give way beneath me, and the last state is worse than the first.

‘Those who are dying of starvation, or have lost name and fame by some irrevocable crime, might think my troubles very light. They might envy me my well-filled platter, my fair repute, the love and the respect bestowed upon me. But, humbly thankful as I am for these good things, I cannot stifle the angry voice of conscience which accuses me of a void life—they do not quench my internal thirst for peace and confidence and unity with the world.

‘Then came the goddess Drudgery I had invoked, and spoke to me, and I replied as follows: “It is my particular source of misery that I cannot labour; I am forced to be inactive by my health; if I could study for six or seven hours a day, the intervals might be devoted to a well-earned relaxation. But now the whole day has to be devoted to encouraging a cheerfulness and peace that rarely come. Relaxation is labour, and the untameable soul frets under its restrictions.”

‘A little nervous strength might make all the difference—a loosening of the bands about my forehead, a soothing of the aching eyes.

‘Or some clear faith in things that are good and true and pure and eternal, would make all the difference.

‘In my present state of entire negation I cannot get the faith without the strength, or the strength without the faith. Both remain outside my reach. I have “Moses and the prophets,” and the sign of Jonah’s gourd. But they avail naught. “*Virtutem video intabescoque relicta.*”

‘The last night I spent in Cannes was the worst of my whole life. I lay awake motionless, my soul stagnant, feeling what is meant by spiritual blackness and darkness. If it should last for ever? As I lay, a tightening approached my heart. It came nearer, the grasp grew firmer, I was cold and lifeless in the clutch of a great agony. If this were death? Catherine, who kept hold of me, seemed far away. I was alone, so utterly desolate that I drank the very cup of the terror of the grave.



The Valley of the Shadow was opened, and the shadow lies still upon my soul.

‘Now, I perceive, since the shadow of that night fell upon me, what is the solitude, the impotence of the soul of man. What is it that we call a soul? If I have no soul, then let me die. If I have a soul I shall not rest till I have brought it into harmony with The Soul, the Universe. But abyss calls to abyss, and the abyss of misery has murmurings which harmonise with the abyss of joy. Until I found this Hell I had no notion of the voice of God. The solitude of this despair asserts Him. I am not alone.’

[This terrible and lonely communing of his spirit face to face with the widest abstractions which his intellect could compass, seems to me to contain the essence of Symonds’s psychological quality. He had carried speculation in the abstract, and the audacious interrogation of the Universe, to their utmost limits. It was inevitable that, if he survived the strain, he would ultimately abandon the vacuum of abstractions in which he was stifling, for the concrete world of men and things about him.

Having boldly plunged into the ‘abyss,’ having learned that when sounded by the plummet of the human intellect, it is actually void and bottomless, the instinct of self-preservation, the shrinking from the ‘*seuil de la folie*’—caused him to cling to the antithesis of the void, the concrete manifestations of life, actual, visible, sensible, as the one salvation in the *mare magnum* of speculation. This is, probably, what he meant when he said that ‘the crisis at Cannes gave him a religion.’ He did not attempt to fill the void with some definite concept of a Deity—that is what many have done—but Symonds’s twofold psychical structure debarred him from such a salvation. Emotionally, he desired the warmth of a personal Deity; intellectually, he rejected as *ipso facto* inadequate any concept of Deity which the human intellect could construct and therefore enclose. He abandoned the effort to grasp the *Idee*, and accepted the *Erscheinungen*, by the study and interrogation of which he might still reach all that was humanly knowable of



God. But the analytical, inquiring, sceptical spirit, and the passion for the absolute still retained the regency of his mind ; therefore, for him all *Erscheinungen*, all phenomena, are to be studied, none neglected ; humanity is to be sounded to its depths, life to be ‘drunk to the lees.’ The field of activity is shifted from thoughts to things. The inquiry, the speculation, the analysis which had hitherto been employed largely in the region of metaphysic, came now to be concentrated on man, on human life, and led the inquirer to investigate the varied and manifold phenomena of that life—the effort to know, the allegiance to truth never wavered. In the process, as was inevitable, the emotional and artistic side of his nature, which had suffered from want of nutrition, was brought into play and received satisfaction ; more of his whole being became energetic, with the result that, in spite of continued ill-health and external trials, he grew, and said he grew, larger, humaner, more content.

How much of this mood Symonds uttered, and in what form he expressed it to his friends, may be gathered from the following letters :]

‘ I <sup>1</sup> do not know why, in my solitude, I should keep silence from speaking to my friends at a distance, and, while I often commune with the idea of them, refuse the medium of pen and paper. Solitude begets solitude, and silence silence ; incestuous and hateful hydras, that perpetuate their brood by hideous interminglements and most abhorred embraces. I cannot write. It is daily becoming clearer to me, and I do not know what is left beyond “le tourment de l’impuissance, la soif de l’impossible.” I am like a sphere in contact at all points with nature, poetry, painting, philosophy, music, passion, yet without a motive force within it. I spin helplessly upon my poles, and never stir a step forward. What is the use of all the conglobated thoughts and feelings in my soul ? I would far sooner have one little faculty of real productiveness, or else have never known the thousand forms of beauty. “Malgré moi l’infini me tourmente.” And I cannot define it so as to

<sup>1</sup> To W. J. Courthope. Cannes, Dec. 28, 1867.

become creative, and pass out of passive into active joys. The forms of Greek life and art haunt me. They wait at my bedside and follow me about my walks, and seem to say: "Make marble for us out of words the world shall read, that we may live once more." Then a great storm sweeps through my mind, and I see Christ crowned with thorns and robed in purple, the blood-dew on His forehead, and the reed in His right hand, colossal, dark as thunder. Earth grows pale before Him, dark behind, and the centuries and the spaces are traversed with swift irresistible conquest. Yet what avails it that the themes of poems and the germs of pictures swell my mind? Then I am miserable; for days I do not think, or feel, or speak. The phantasmagorias have vanished, and earth has nothing to show me, not even in these olive-trees I love so much, and orange rows and cypresses beside the cottage walls, above their still clear pools, tressed with maidenhair. And in the midst of fruitless tumults I live inactive. Vain and barren as they are, they waste my intellect and make me sterile of the smallest epistolary fancies. "Accipe hanc apologiam pro litteris non scriptis." Zeller, that paradox of my unequal existence, keeps on his caterpillar pace from day to day. The slow muddy river of translated speech indeed stagnates now and then, forming into noisome pools and eddying in slime about perplexing boulders. Yet voluminously thick it oozes on. The text will, I hope, get itself done by means of another month's work. Then come the notes, *πόνος πόνος*.

'After that *qu'en penses-tu*? Since I have assumed the pedant's mask, I am of mind to propose to Longman a revised and annotated, and generally metamorphosed, version of Hegel's "Aesthetik." This is what the aids are likely to arrive at. For the aids are not forgotten—only like Arethusa, another fluviöse simile, they are burrowing for a while beneath the ocean of my idleness; and should they spring again in that Hegelian Ortygia, would they not indeed be beautiful?

'There is a certain cripple of mine which, having got itself put into print, will presumedly appear in native and artificial deformity in the next "North British." Look at it. It is an article on Theocritean landscape. Verily, I shall end with

being what the French call a *polygraphe fécond*—a jack of all trades, æsthetical, and a humbug who has gorged and disgorged Hegel. *Jam satis jocati sumus*. From the subjective to the objective, *allons donc et soyons un peu raisonnables*. It has snowed, hailed, thundered much; blown a keen north-east for ten days irresistibly. The ice is thick upon the ponds. The chimneys smoke. The keyholes and door-cracks emit dismal wailings and piercing draughts. I have neuralgia in my cheek and blisters on my chest. “Voilà de l’objective. Assez, n’est-ce pas? Essayons encore, et cette fois de meilleure façon.”

‘I read with some interest an article on the Talmud, which, simply because English people are bulls, terrified at the smallest shred of red wool, seems to have sold six editions of the “Quarterly.” It is what one had expected. That Christ incarnated His nation’s spirit, and that those who worship Him must henceforth study the life and not the doctrine, giving new meanings to the *Verbum Caro factum est*—and defending their faith on the vital as distinguished from the intellectual originality of Jesus. You do not greatly care for the origin of creeds. Yet, I think, if you have not yet read Doctor Deutsch, you should study his Talmud article.

‘I have also been reading the correspondence of Heine. Do you know him? I mean, of course, the poet, or patriot, as he preferred to be called. It is good to find anything so purely fresh in this century—such a source of tears and laughter, bitter, sweet, ironical, and tender, ribald and religious, all in one gush. Why do not the gods give humour to more of us, and make a better world? We do for the most part carry about our sorrows and our purposes in such sadness—like Dante’s hypocrites beneath their leaden cowls. What besides have I read lately? Well, two novels of Sir W. Scott, several of Balzac, one of C. Brontë’s, Miss B.’s life, the “Phædrus” and the “Symposium,” none of Ariosto’s for a long time, but poetry of all sorts and sizes, and much German philosophy. The novels, n.b., are read to me. We are starved here for want of literature, the library beginning and ending with Tauchnitz.

‘I was delighted with your last letter of (I am ashamed to say) Nov. 25. The quotation you asked for was, I believe

from Hervey, and to this effect: "Ariosto's golden cantos and Guicciardini's silver history are too stale for queasy stomachs, but they must be having a Greene's 'Arcadia,' and now do long impatiently for a Greene's 'Faery Queene'"—I only quote from memory, nor did I ever charge my mind with the sentence, so I cannot depend upon it, and indeed I suspect that it is not correct. You will find it, however, in the notes to Dyce's account of Greene, published in his edition of Greene and Peele. Did I tell you Madame L. is enchanted with parts of the poem? I shrewdly suspect she does not understand it all. But she writes tenderly about it. She is at Mentone, groaning over the cold. Janet is very well. It is good of you to be hunting for her Struwel-Peter. When he comes he will be a very welcome guest. Mr. Lear, author of the "Book of Nonsense," a great friend of ours, is here. He makes rhymes for her and illustrates them; one about "the owl and the pussy cat," who "went to sea in a beautiful pea-green boat," is notable, and his pictures of "Sing a song of sixpence" would greatly edify you. H. Sidgwick is coming to stay with me. He amused me with an account of a dialogue he had with Conington about my literary merits; they seem to have quarrelled over my remains.'

'I<sup>1</sup> am daily becoming more moderate in my expectations both for myself and others. We have pens enough, miserable pens, it is true, but can we show better? I, for my part, feel paralysed by the confusion round me, science and religion clashing, no creeds emergent, social conditions shifting like quicksands, the phantasmagorias of old literatures rising up to mock our modern style, the whole fabric of humanity, within and without, rocking and surging in earthquake throes. We live in *anni mirabiles*; and the nervous fluids of our brains, instead of being concentrated upon single thoughts, are dispersed through a thousand channels. There is little productive energy, much febrile excitement of interests; apparent omniscience, real blindness and impotent drifting, on all sides]

<sup>1</sup> To G. Miller. Dec. 20, 1867.

I am inclined to wrap my cloak round me, to bow my head and wait, "though watching from a ruined tower"; to die the child of a turbid generation, with eyes clouded by the dust kicked up around me, dust of falling creeds and systems and new buildings, with ears deafened by all sorts of cries, war-cries, costermongers' cries, demagogic eloquences, pulpit vacuities, and innumerable other roarings of the vasty deep of void sound. If there is a future for man, these things, from the pinnacle of some immeasurably far-off star, may be co-ordinated—the broken light resolved into one white beam.'

[On January 30, 1868, the Symonds went to Nice; 'and for a good part of the time we had again the cheering society of Courthope.' On April 7, 1868, Symonds left the Riviera for Corsica, and a journey through Tuscany, Venetia, and Lombardy back to the Alps. The Diary is copious, and large portions of it were worked up into the sketches of 'Ajaccio,' 'Ravenna,' 'Parma,' and 'The Love of the Alps.' The more solid intellectual work of the period came to light in a study of Aristophanes, in chapters on Ariosto and Tasso. 'Perplexed and foiled, the literary faculty never wholly failed me; and while I thought I was doing nothing toilsomely, I was really laying the foundations for a good deal of my future work.' The Diary loses its introspective tone. Objective life, and his keen capacity for enjoying it, once more assert themselves; affirmation assumes the place of negation in the ceaseless flux and reflux of his nature. The record is brimful of enjoyment, of observation, of historical acquisition; notes on the history of Corsica, the origin of *Vendetta*, the funeral songs, the *Voceri*, an analysis of the Corsican heroes—Giudice della Rocca, Sampiero, and Paoli.]

*April 10.*<sup>1</sup>—Between 1821 and 1850 (thirty years) there were 4,319 murders in Corsica. All men over twelve carried guns, pistols, and knives as soon as they could get them, and went armed in the streets. In 1853 the French Government under the Prefet Thuillier routed the bandits out, and killed

<sup>1</sup> Diary.



between 200 and 300 of them. An edict was then promulgated against bearing arms, and things have been better since.

The following is the letter of a bandit chief to the French official engaged in building a barrack :

‘ DALL’ INOSPITE MIO SOGGIORNO,<sup>1</sup>

‘ Il 15 giugno 1852.

‘ SIGNOR SETA,—Malgrado mi si dia il nome di Malvace, nonostante non ho mai operato male contro alcuno senza giusta causa et senza prevenirlo ; l’istesso voglio operare con voi. Il dare l’ospitalità ai miei nemici è un offendermi. . . . Perciò, o voi tralasciate di fare la caserna, o voi incorrete il mio sdegno. Iddio voglia che io non possa mai vedervi.—SERAFINO BATTINI.’

This man at twenty-four years of age had killed twenty-two persons.

AJACCIO, *April 19 (Monday)*.—The day broke grey and cloudy, promising rain. We tried to get our carriage postponed to another day, but the diligence officials refused, and we had to leave soon after eight in fog and gloom. The mist increased in density, and as we neared the mountains, broke into steady rain. All we could see was the near country, forlorn moorland, varied here and there with ilex trees and *macchie*. Chestnuts began to show themselves as we rose, and before reaching Bocognano we joined the course of a beautiful mountain stream as green as emerald. Roaring round granite boulders, and gliding over smooth slabs of polished stone like the muscles on a strong man’s arm (to use the Theocritean simile which Tennyson has transferred to Enid), and eddying into still deep pools, it ran its various course, and we followed its windings upwards till the clouds, parting for a

<sup>1</sup> ‘ FROM MY INHOSPITABLE ABODE.

‘ MR. SETA,—Although they have given me the name of Malvace (bad’un), I have never hurt a man without just cause and warning given. And so I mean to act by you. To lodge my enemies is to injure me ; and so you will either stop building the barracks or incur my wrath. God grant I never see you.—SERAFINO BATTINI.’



moment, revealed snow heights above Bocognano—steep slopes ragged with the leafless boles and branches of gigantic chestnut trees. This place, with its downward view along the valley to Ajaccio and the sea, and its upward glance at Monte d'Oro, must be a Paradise in summer when the thick chestnut woods yield shade, and the river brings perpetual purity and coolness from the hills.

Our road, after leaving Bocognano, ascended rapidly. The fog increased, and the west wind, driving from the sea, blew hurricanes of mist and rain into the narrow gorge. Beneath there was nothing but a seething chaos of cloud foam, and above some dripping branches of forlorn laurustinus and heath. The torrent, raving far below, was all we heard. So dense was the fog that we seemed to be skirting a sheer precipice, and the road had no parapet. A certain monotony in the mist and the straight line of the path we were pursuing, seemed to indicate that we were skirting the vast wall of Monte d'Oro, with nothing but a gorge between. The chestnuts now began to be scarce, the ilex disappeared, and their place was taken by huge beech trees overgrown with pink and silver lichen. The wind increased as we neared the Foce, or highest pass of all, into a perfect *tourmente*. Our carriage rocked upon the narrow traverses of the ascending road, and the clouds swept past us, visibly condensed into white fleeces by the furious gusts.

At last the top was reached. It still rained a deluge, and our driver, who had kept his spirits up with snatches of old song and monotonous chaunts, now fell to cursing and screaming at his horses. Down the horses dashed, and the carriage followed, groaning and swinging round the corners, jolting over wooden bridges, and careering along causeways slightly elevated over brawling streams, without a parapet or curb-stone to protect the edge.

Between Bocognano and Vivario there is not a village on the road. It is the most solitary and stern mountain pass that I have ever traversed. The miserable stables, huddled up in snow, which we passed at one point of the Foce, only served to make the forest solitude seem more intense.

At Vivario we stopped to let the driver dry himself. In this quaint little village, plastered upon the hill-side, a mere wasp's nest of lank, lean houses, comfortless to look upon, and even more barren than the native rocks which have their lichen to adorn them, we found Courthope, who had walked from Bocognano. His night had not been spent without adventures. The old man of the inn there has a face and beard like an old grizzled wolf's. He wears a fur cap to complete his villainous look. Courthope heard him talking to his wife about the Inglese, and caught only a few words of what he said—among them these, 'ho rubato.' Soon after supper he went to bed, and fell to dreaming of the hillsides above Bocognano, which he thought were peopled with huge goats far bigger than the houses. These goats took it into their heads to descend the mountains, turning somersaults. As they threatened the village with destruction in the course of this uncouth pastime, he got very frightened, and woke up with a shout, to find himself sitting on the outside of his bed. Soon after, he heard someone try his door, and then the old man asked if he were *couché*. Courthope bade him begone, but he kept fumbling and mumbling on, as if on evil thoughts intent. By this time Courthope was awake to the terrors of his situation, and keenly conscious of the 'ho rubato' he had overheard. He, in his turn, began to scold, and proved himself so wide awake, that the old wretch, whether baulked of his prey, or really only anxious for the comfort of his guest, at last retired.

'Time<sup>1</sup> has gone very rapidly, and we have done and seen a great deal since we left Florence. Bologna, Modena, Ferrara, and Padua have all been seen and admired by us. But the heat has sometimes exceeded all power of endurance, and I have been very anxious for Janet. It does me more good than harm, but it takes away her appetite, and makes it hard to cure her of a cold which she caught while crossing the Apennines.

'Bologna gave us much more pleasure than it did when

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte. Venice, May 8, 1868.

we were there two years ago. It is a most picturesque place. The heat and the weakness of my ankle made me lazy there, and I was very glad to sit out on church steps in the Piazza, watching the humours of the crowd and smoking cigarettes, or talking with Courthope about Italian and English literature. I have read the greater part of the "Orlando Furioso" since I left Monaco, and this has given us a great deal to discuss. It is a most splendid poem, and I wish that its twenty thousand and odd lines were doubled. To get so much splendid poetical genius combined with fantastic humour is rare, and there is no one in the whole range of literature like Ariosto for this union. When I meet you I shall make you read some of the beautiful passages. It is a pity that Ariosto cannot be put into the hands of ladies. However much they may be fortified by the superior education they are going to get, I doubt if they will ever appreciate the mocking spirit of this poet.

'In the midst of my Orlando reading you may fancy I was glad to visit Ferrara, and to see Ariosto's house, &c. The librarian of the town let me, as a great favour, handle the autograph MS. of the Orlando, so that I had a good opportunity of examining its multitudinous corrections. Long passages are almost illegible from frequent rewriting, and the style, which seems to be that of a swift improvisatore, is the result of most patient elaboration and deliberate art. At the same time, I think those stanzas which he had repolished over and over again do not run so smoothly or with the same impetuosity as those which came straight from his brain in the heat of inspiration.'

[In Venice, also, Symonds read Tennyson's 'Lucretius' for the first time, and sent the following appreciation of the poem to a friend :]

'I did the voluptuous verse of "Lucretius" full justice, for I read it in my gondola as we glided by the Ducal Palace and beneath the bridges of St. Mark's. It is splendid in rhythm and in language, perhaps the most splendid of all Tennyson's

essays in blank verse, and the most gorgeously coloured piece of unrhymed English since Milton. But I do not like it as a poem. The drama is undramatic. Its action is slow and rotatory, not swift, simple, and straightforward, like tiger leaps or lightning flashes, as it ought to be. The *φροντίδων ἐπιστάσεις* and ejaculations, which are introduced to give a dramatic ring to the poem, strike me as stiff and frigid, ill-jointed and not projected at a jet. The whole is very pictorial, a symbol of our modern poetry, which has absorbed the spirit of the picturesque, and which is like a bit of Watts in words. It agreed singularly with the splendid sensualities of Veronese and Titian and Giorgione. The picture of the Nymph and Satyr translated itself at once for me into the language of Venetian lights and colours, the flying forms, divinely, bestially nude; the sturdy growth of laurels and the "million myrtled wilderness," the golden glare of level sunset, parting burnished leaves from purple gloom and rounding the white limbs that fled, the shaggy limbs that followed, and glowing in eager eyes and gilding thick tressed coils of hair. There is great power in that passage about the nymph. I think Tennyson has never risen to so high a pitch of mere artistic excellence. The pseudo-simplicity of the Prologue and Epilogue is ludicrous, especially when it breaks out into the elaborate physiology of the "wicked broth" bit.

‘But what transcendent lines there are :—

A riotous confluence of watercourses . . . .

Ruining along the illimitable inane . . . .

and the piece about the placid gods and the sunrise, and the repose of philosophic life.

‘They make me fancy that we moderns, with tamer fancy and feebler thought, have a better trick of versifying than Milton or Shelley.

‘With the purity of Italian literature in my mind, I see how decadent and autumnal, how over-ripe and without germ of future growth, is this gorgeous foliage of our poetic vineyards.’

'You<sup>1</sup> do not write in the best spirits, and you say you have never felt scepticism really till now. I do not believe that any man who is healthy and active can know the pinch of scepticism—what there is wretched and weak and morbid in it. Life is so good a thing to the strong, that no despair about the essence underlying its pleasing shows can make them valueless. It is only when the phantasmagoria of the world becomes sickly or menacing that the intolerable burden of not knowing whence, where, whither, how, &c., makes itself oppressive. I have been for so long like a softer kind of Leopardi that I long to say with sincerity—

Or<sup>2</sup> poserai per sempre,  
 Stanco mio cor. Perì l'estremo inganno,  
 Ch' eterno mi credei. Perì. Ben sento  
 In noi dei cari inganni,  
 Non che la speme, il desiderio è spento.  
 Posa per sempre. Assai  
 Palpitasti.

As for the garbage of the world, and the really good things in it, I cannot weigh them against each other. In the infinity of the universe they seem to merge and become as one. At all events for me, who am a grain of clay upon this tiniest of little worlds, and who live for less than a moment in the short minute of its terraqueous æons, when I think of the chaos of greater universes and the irrevocable circles of eternity, and when I remember it was but yesterday that the like of me imagined sun, moon, and stars made to give them light—I fold the wings of aspiration and of discontent, and wait in patience till the chemistry of the years resolves me into my elements. I do not wish for death, since life has many beautiful things

<sup>1</sup> To H. Sidgwick. Venice, May 14, 1868.

<sup>2</sup> 'Now shalt thou rest for ever, rest till death,  
 Tired heart. Thy last illusion perisheth—  
 The dream thou wast eternal. It is gone.  
 Of all thy fond illusions none remain;  
 The hope, the very wish to hope, is flown.  
 Rest then for ever. Thou hast throbb'd thy fill.'

Translated by Symonds, under the initials P. M., in the *Cliftonian*, the school magazine of Clifton College, in 1872.

in it. But I am incapable of living for any purpose, or of raising my soul to the altitude of a delusion. Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die. Let us weep and pray, for to-morrow we die. Let us laugh and sing, let us paint pictures and write poems, let us love and kill, let us improve our species and disseminate disease, let us parade the destinies of man and draw our lineage from the ape, for to-morrow we die. "One is prone," you say, "in scepticism to make semi-practical the idea that nothing matters." Yes; and then you proceed: "it is so easy to show the absurdity of this semi-practicality." If it is so easy, show it me; tell me what is practical, if anything is practical, or if any sect except the *peisithanatoi* were final and irrefutable.

Assai

Palpitasti. Non val cosa nessuna  
I moti tuoi.

'You will, I know, be glad to hear my head is stronger—not strong. I read Italian poetry—the 20,000 and odd lines of golden Ariosto, Tasso, Dante, Tassoni, and more modern singers. If I ever get capable of anything, I should like to write an English history of Italian poetry. Our poetry and theirs are twin sisters, and the rest are all outside.'

[From Venice Symonds went homewards by Switzerland, visiting Mürren, whence the discussion on scepticism is continued.]

'I<sup>1</sup> found up here a letter of yours which had been at Milan, Cadenabbia, Luzern, and Grindelwald. I do not know whether twice crossing the Alps improves the quality of letters as it may do of wines; but certainly yours was very acceptable, and I should have been sorry not to have received it.

'Perhaps by this time you are out of scepticism and in M'Cosh. So I will not discuss that part of your letter—except to say that I think you hit the most intolerable part of the world's riddle in the eternity *a parte ante*. But it oppresses me just as much if I try to imagine no God, as if I state the

<sup>1</sup> To H. Sidgwick. Mürren, June 21, 1868.



absurdity of a God emerging from somnolence into world-creative activity. I wish I could embrace Positivism as a creed.

‘It is just what I could not do. I feel that the instant I endeavour to take the ἐμοί and not the ἀπλῶς point of view, I resent the attempt to impose upon myself. No healthy reaction takes place, but I am thrown back upon a moral helplessness inclining to Materialism, and to the feeble hope (yearly more vain) of perhaps living so as to enjoy myself without doing any positive harm.

‘Then, again, as to wickedness; your inclined plane is a just statement; but what is to arrest one on this plane, and (from another point of view) why should I seek to be arrested? I am here in the same see-saw as about scepticism, and end in the same temporising, modified by an agonising sense of there being somewhere a clear truth—a something ἀπλῶς and not ἐμοί, or even πόλει, but plain and unmistakable when once perceived.’

[This journey ended at Clifton in July 1868. The London house was definitely abandoned; and on November 17, Symonds and his family settled into No. 7 Victoria Square, Clifton, where, on January 15, 1869, his third daughter, Margaret, was born.]

## CHAPTER X

## MANHOOD—EMBARKED ON LITERATURE

The crisis at Cannes, and its results—Lectures to the Sixth Form at Clifton College—Their effect—On ‘Richard Feverel’—Settles in Victoria Square—The Hastings election petition—Disraeli’s speech in the Irish Debate—The Social Science Association—On the religious attitude—On Euripides—A journey through the Dolomites—At Heiligenblut—Translation of Goethe’s Proem to ‘Gott und Welt’—Dr. Symonds’s ill health—Scepticism—The first idea of the history of the Renaissance in Italy—Lectures on Dante—Death of Dr. Symonds—Moves into Clifton Hill House—Publishes his first book—His own estimate of his intellectual and literary powers.

1869 [SYMONDS always wrote and spoke of the crisis at Cannes as a veritable turning-point in his spiritual and intellectual life. He could not see at once where the issue of that crisis was about to lead him; he feared that the ‘gloom of the last two months would project itself all over his life’; he writes: ‘I have found hell in this terrestrial Paradise; and I have ceased to believe in Paradises. The Alps are my only unexploded illusion, and these I feel within me the potentiality of smirching’; to which came the cooling answer of a friend, ‘that when people talk of hell, they often mean a state of their nerves.’

But these depths of Leopardesque despair and disillusionment could not last long with a man of Symonds’s essentially active, vigorous, sanguine nature. It is true that he writes, on March 6, 1869, ‘I can never care for the actualities of life. I cannot live without illusions’; but the subsequent remark: ‘I am not made for *ennui*, but for activity,’ is really more expressive of the central fibre and temper of the man. He rejoiced in activity. Nothing was more dangerous to his health than boredom. And as a matter of fact, he was about to enter

upon a new period of his existence, in which action, work, definite external employment begin slowly at first, and in spite of ill-health, to assume an ever-increasing place in his life. The moods of speculative negation, the abysses of depression which had haunted him from boyhood, were never entirely obliterated, and returned when any period of over-work, or too high a pressure of living, reduced his nervous energy, but they never again dominated his life as they had hitherto done.

Soon after settling down at Clifton, in No. 7 Victoria Square, Symonds made arrangements with Dr. Percival, Head-Master of Clifton College, to give lectures to the Sixth Form upon Greek Literature. Symonds always talked with pleasure of this work ; it served him as preparation for his own 'Studies in the Greek Poets,' and it brought him into frequent and delightful companionship with masters and boys alike, many of whom became his lasting friends. The Diaries dwell with evident enjoyment on the walks, the talks, the concerts, the debates, the essays which were the natural outcome of this new activity. One of his pupils, writing of Symonds's lectures in 1872, records the strong intellectual stimulus which he imparted to his auditors in the following terms :

'It is far from easy to express the quality of that powerful influence which Mr. Symonds exercised upon all with whom he came in contact, and more especially upon lads just about to enter the intellectual wrestling ground. The most striking quality of that influence was its capacity to transport us into a higher, a more rarified, intellectual atmosphere. It was not so much the erudition and the culture of our teacher which impressed us, it was rather the sudden stimulus conveyed from that extraordinarily active brain, with an impact which I still recall as something almost physical. His intellect set ours on fire ; and this result was obtained, not merely by what he said, but by that more potent method of education, the sympathetic display of a powerful mind in movement. And for some of us the consequence was that we became intellectually devoted to him. It was impossible to have too much of him. The hours spent in his study that looked out on the sharply descending road, the long walks on the stately terrace

which commanded the city, its spires and towers, and distant Dundry closing all, were occasions to be sought for eagerly ; the thrill of them remained long after they were passed, and would keep more than one of us at the dormitory window, sitting late into the summer twilight, drinking the western breeze that blew across the downs, and seeming to catch uneasy anticipations of life from the movement of the night wind.

‘And the secret of the intellectual domination that Mr. Symonds exercised lay in his vast sympathy, peculiarly sensitive as it was towards youth. This sympathy, the deepest instinct of his nature, was the means whereby he arrived at what he valued most highly in life—knowledge of the human soul. It was amazing to watch the rapidity with which he reached the core of people in whom his interest had been awakened. And this determination to probe to the bottom of things, to be thorough, displayed itself through all his conduct, and exercised upon the docile nature of many boys a most salutary influence.

‘Among the many brilliant gifts of the mind which fascinated us at that time, none was more striking than Mr. Symonds’s dialectic power. His conduct of an argument had some of the pleasures of the chase, and was a delightful exercise for us, the σκύλακες, the young puppies of the Platonic dialogue. He made it his endeavour that no conversation should be left at a loose end, but that the course of the argument should be resumed before it closed, and the conclusion to which the argument had led should be carefully noted for future use, and the foundation of a sound and reasoned view.

‘Nor was his courage less remarkable than his intellectual sincerity. We had before us the continual example of a man struggling with ill-health, grievously handicapped in the career of life, yet never complaining, rather rejoicing, dedicating himself, obviously, heart and soul, mind and body, to the achievement of the work he had taken in hand.

‘So then it seems to me that what Mr. Symonds taught us boys, far and beyond any views about the Greek drama or any appreciations of Greek poets, was intellectual sincerity and tenacity of purpose. The medium through which he conveyed

the lesson was sympathy, love. In this way, not consciously perhaps, but instinctively, he enforced the doctrine which he was never tired of inculcating in his latter years, that life is more than literature, the man himself than his handiwork.'

What Symonds himself thought of his lectures, how he regarded them, will be gathered from some phrases towards the close of the following characteristic letter:]

'We<sup>1</sup> are still exiles from our house, which is at present a chaos. The movers of my goods have lost above three boxes of my favourite books, ingeniously selected from the beginnings and ends of editions.

'I have finished "Richard Feverel." I kept constantly telling myself that "this novelist is a poet," and when I came to the chapter called "An Enchantress," I felt that the nineteenth century was ever so far ahead of the Elizabethans. Suddenly I remembered that these were both your ideas. The man affects me terribly. I quite see why, in spite of his being one of our greatest novelists, he is not read. The sense of pain produced by R. F. is intense. My mind ached at passages. I was stifled, and had to stop reading. Even Balzac does not so affect me, for Balzac is more scientific on the one side, and more in his subject on the other. What is terrible about G. M. is, that he feels it as a poet, and stands aside from it as an ironic showman. There is a great want of truth, verisimilitude rather, about some of the characters. I don't realise Sir Austin, or indeed Richard, except as a picture.

'Since I last wrote things have not altered much, except that my emotions are less occupied and my imagination more exercised. It is difficult to do anything educationally, or towards living in common here. But I grow and steady and intensify in feeling. The lectures do pretty well, but I have not the art of lecturing; and I do not believe in my own lectures. Yet I keep a fair face and try to be impressive.'

[Besides teaching the Sixth Form, Symonds delivered his lectures to ladies' classes in Bristol. He was invited to become

<sup>1</sup> To Henry Sidgwick. Clifton Hill House, May 17, 1869.

Secretary to the Social Science Association, and though he refused, he attended the meetings on that subject. In fact, he was beginning to assume a place in the civic life of Bristol which his father's position in the city and the county readily secured for him.

At the end of May the Symonds were settled in No. 7 Victoria Square, after a great deal of trouble from lost cases of books, and a fraudulent foreman, who, instead of putting their furniture in order after bringing it down from London, absconded with 68*l.* 10*s.*, which he had received for its transport.

While their own house was being got ready for them they occupied Clifton Hill House, and Symonds was, to his own great benefit, actively engaged in helping his father-in-law, Mr. North, through the Hastings election petition, about which he writes thus to his sister, at that time travelling in Italy with Dr. Symonds, whose health had shown serious signs of breaking down :]

‘ I <sup>1</sup> want to thank you for your very nice letter of the 19th, and to tell you how delighted I am to hear of your enjoying Rome, though I wish you had better weather. I fear that my father has not at once felt the good of the change ; but I am sure it must tell on him in time, and make him stronger. I am here about the Hastings petition. I have been seeing barristers, privy councillors, a judge, M.P.’s, and a police magistrate about the tactics which ought to be followed. It is hard to get Mr. North to take any definite line of self-defence. But I hope we have at last committed him to the employment of an agent, and through this agent I fancy it will be possible to draw him into getting good counsel for the pleading and cross-examination of witnesses. He hardly likes my interference, and yet he is pleased at the evidence of my interest. I do not expect to be able to do much real service, except by the testification of this readiness to help.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte.

<sup>2</sup> The petition was dismissed with costs, by Mr. Justice Blackburne, on April 17, 1869.



‘It is terribly wet and cold in London, most wretched weather for bundling about in cabs, trying to catch people who always seem to elude you. One lawyer I have to meet at Wimbledon Station at 9.15 A.M. to-morrow.

‘Last night I dined with Dr. Lushington, Mrs. Norris’s father, and met there Jowett, who was in great force. We had a long argument, after dinner, of course, about the Irish debate, and Jowett and I were the only two who had been struck by Dizzy’s speech. I confess to having thought it a very able piece of oratory, and to having felt the force of some of its arguments. Mr. North, who heard it, said it lasted over two hours, during which Mr. Dizzy drank two huge tumblers of brandy and water, so that he got quite groggy at last. Yet he did not give it in a telling way, raised no real cheers, and roused the most manifest signs of boredom and contempt on the faces of Gladstone and Bright. I hope to get home again to-morrow. I am beginning to feel the colds and draughts of this nomad life in London on my chest.’

[In the summer of 1869 Symonds went for a tour in Switzerland, to Mürren, Grimsel, Furka, St. Gotthard, Maderaner Thal, Engelberg, where he caught a cold and brought it home with him, the effect of which is seen in the depressed tone of these letters.]

‘Why<sup>1</sup> I have not written is simply, I think, because my nervous energy is diminished, and a letter costs me a good deal. I have been taken up with a course of lectures I had written on Greek poetry, from Hesiod to Pindar, which has interested me. It is for the college during the term. The pleasure was great, for I knew that when the ladies’ course began, I should have to spend my time chiefly in the work of the second sets, getting up lectures, giving them, and reading papers. I began on Saturday with about eighty ladies. They seemed to me pleasant to deal with, and more attentive and repaying than boys. Also I had a highly intelligent audience—ladies like the two Miss Winkworths being the high-water mark—a few

<sup>1</sup> To Henry Sidgwick. Clifton, Oct. 12, 1869.

school-girls the low. It is not easy to strike a balance between the two extremes.

‘The Social Science Association, as far as its talk went, was extremely twaddling and boring. I should have blushed to inflict on an educated audience all the papers I heard. Some of the presidential addresses were mildly interesting. But I approve of the whole thing, since it does certainly stir people up, rub them together, and set them going by a direct appeal to their weaknesses—the love of notables: most particularly Kingsleyolatrea was rampant. He seemed to me, spite of ranting and raging and foaming, and swelling himself to twice his natural dimensions, or perhaps because of all this, to be the right man in the right place. He made an impression on masses.’

1870. ‘Since<sup>1</sup> your visit nothing very memorable has happened, except a visit from Jowett. Jowett had much to say, chiefly about my work on Elizabethan literature, which he wished me to undertake in a severely historical spirit, also about more grave matters, especially the future of religious feeling and opinion in England. He complains bitterly of the “flabbiness” of our religious consciousness, and rejects my facile belief, that the civilised world must, in its present highly intellectualised scientific condition, advance, after a needful period of softening, towards a new synthesis. His firm conviction of the possibility of continuing for centuries in a slough of lightly worn and morally obstructive dogmas, prejudices, permanent attitudes of traditional acceptance, &c., startled and appalled me. I have grown to believe myself in the centre of a transformation scene, and to expect that ere long (I don’t much care if I reckon by decades or by centuries) the scenery and figures will be fixed for a new action.

‘You ask me for an epigram on Euripides. I cannot make one, except this: That he seems to me a sort of divine Beaumont and Fletcher, what they would have been in a more genial atmosphere. He, like them, adorns his strangest, most unnatural

<sup>1</sup> To Henry Sidgwick. Clifton, Jan. 29, 1870. ‘Too late at night for writing.’

situation (that *e.g.*, of Admetus) with exquisite poetry. I felt in reading him what I felt in reading them, that each play was a grape from a ripe cluster; if one seemed less good than another I knew the next might restore my delight in the flavour of the whole. These, however, are mere bonbons and carved cherry-stones of criticism. For my ladies I have to plough through *Medea* and *Alcestis*, talking the common stuff.

‘I am very languid—brain, as usual, at about one quarter working power; but I rub on. . . . It provokes me to think of your enormous fertility of ideas and power of elaborating thought, also of your memory, also of your more than adequacy to the ordinary burdens of life. I say it provokes me—not, thank goodness, makes me envious; but if I had more of that sort of thing I feel I could realise so much. My faculties cannot be brought to valuable activity without interest, application, concentration, and this I cannot give.’

[Ill-health, ‘chest so weak,’ once more compelled Symonds to take a spring journey to Switzerland in May 1870. This was prolonged by Monte Generoso, Genoa, Bassano to the Dolomites, which he thought ‘vastly overrated,’ and then to Heiligenblut, from which place the letters are again happy. There, on the glacier, Symonds made the following translation of Goethe’s ‘Proëmium to God and the World,’ a poem which exercised a very strong influence upon his religious opinions:]

#### PROËMIUM TO GOD AND THE WORLD.

To Him who from eternity, self-stirred,  
Himself hath made by His creative word;  
To Him who, seek to name Him as we will,  
Unknown within Himself abideth still:  
To Him supreme who maketh faith to be,  
Trust, hope, love, power, and endless energy.

Strain ear and eye till sight and sound be dim,  
Thou’lt find but faint similitudes of Him;  
Yea, and thy spirit in her flight of flame  
Still tries to gauge the symbol and the name:

Charmed and compelled thou climb'st from height to height  
 And round thy path the world shines wondrous bright;  
 Time, space, and size and distance cease to be,  
 And every step is fresh infinity.

What were the God who sat outside to see  
 The spheres beneath His finger circling free?  
 God dwells within, and moves the world and moulds;  
 Himself and nature in one form enfolds:  
 Thus all that lives in Him and breathes and is,  
 Shall ne'er His presence, ne'er His Spirit miss.

The soul of man, too, is an universe;  
 Whence follows it that race with race concurs  
 In naming all it knows of good and true,  
 God—yea, its own God—and with honour due  
 Surrenders to His sway both earth and heaven,  
 Fears Him, and loves, where place for love is given.

PASTERZE GLACIER, *June 27, 1870.*

The dangerous illness of Dr. Symonds caused the travellers to shorten their journey. They returned to England with all speed, and by September Symonds was back again in Clifton, which seems to have set up the old *malaise* from which he periodically suffered.

This mood found heightened expression in the following passage:

'Hegel then is Nehushtan,' he writes to a friend. 'Does not the devouring voice of the centuries cry aloud to all creeds, policies and structures, "Down with them"? It is sad to see these climbings to Olympus—giants that turn to cloud after they have rolled to the top, irradiate with morn and evening—and not meanwhile to see Olympus itself, or to know whether there be indeed any such mountain.

'Everything crumbles at my touch, and is dust. Even love and friendship ring hollow; no fault of theirs, but of this grovelling self. What I read does not reach me. Nature seems to hide her secret, or what is far worse, to have none. Art becomes a matter of antiquarian interest. It is all corruption and putrescence in this world.

'Then, behold, the next minute this world appears divine,

and I love it, and know that the corruption and putrescence are [only] in my soul.'

There is clearly something very much the matter here. Undoubtedly the chief factor in this *malaise* is health; and the sceptical attitude which is here expressed was due, in part at least, to Symonds's determination to accept nothing relative or partial (ἐμoί) in his analysis of life, and to insist on attaining the absolute and universal (ἀπλῶς). In this respect he was a Platonist of the Parmenidean side of Platonism. But this integrity of speculation, this addiction to knowable truth, brought its own sufferings. He was, sceptical, but not sceptical enough for peace or faith; he believed absolute knowledge to be attainable; and so in the pursuit of knowledge each acquisition is instantly tested, analysed, and flung aside as not absolute, only partial. We cannot help suspecting that had he seen Olympus he would have climbed it, and no sooner had he reached the top than he would have doubted the solidity of the peak, and begun to unpick the mountain to see whether it rested on a firm basis; his determination to know would have compelled him to this.

It seems, however, that there was still another factor in the pain which expresses itself in such a terrible outcry. The want of achievement, the failure in accomplishment—placed as high as he placed it—entirely due to bad health and adverse circumstances, were galling to Symonds's ambition. Finally, we must remember that such passages are the outcome of moods which often exhaust themselves, as here, in the actual expression. They indicate a deep dive into the abysses which underlie life, and a rapid return to the surface; as now—for almost immediately after writing the passage I have quoted, the idea of his large work on the Renaissance is definitely projected for the first time, in a letter dated October 24, 1870. The scheme had, doubtless, slowly been taking shape ever since Symonds won the Chancellor's Prize, with an essay on this subject; and all his subsequent studies on Elizabethan drama, which he found 'twin sister' to Italian poetry, had gone to enrich his knowledge and increase his desire for the work. The first proposal, which came from Mr. F. Myers,



was for a joint work on the Renaissance. But that was abandoned, Mr. Myers taking to other subjects. Symonds then turned his thoughts more positively, though diffidently, to the enterprise. 'My heart bleeds,' he writes, 'to think of my own incapacity for a great work. I must not think of it; for the very thought paralyses. I am working but feebly, being feebler than usual, but I hope to do some solid work in the editorship of Conington's Miscellanies; and I meanwhile absorb Italian slowly, how slowly a brain like yours could not conceive.'

1871. By February 1, 1871, Symonds is writing hard at his 'first chapter, which is meant to contain a sweeping view of the ethnology, political history, domestic habits, religious movements, arts, learning and language of Italy before the age of Dante. To get so much accumulated matter out of my head is both a relief and an exhaustion. My Dante lectures began on Saturday. I had a class of one hundred and fifty. I am going to give the same course at Exeter next month. My father is still very ill.'

This illness terminated fatally on February 25. Symonds, who was deeply attached to his father, and was profoundly influenced by him, felt the loss most keenly. To a friend he writes: 'I hardly expected to feel the blow so crushing. I have not only lost a father, but a best friend. In him the most spontaneous and unselfish love for me was combined with sympathy for my tastes and occupations, pride in my success, if ever I had any, interest in every undertaking. I could not think of any other loss which could bring so much sense of isolation, of having now truly been deprived of what hitherto was vital.'

In the Autobiography Symonds says:—'About a week before his death he told me that all his thoughts upon "the great questions" (so he always spoke) were resolved into the one thought of God as good, and of trust in Him. He was buried by the side of my mother, in Arno's Vale Cemetery, near Bristol, on March 2. The scene, as we mounted the hill and stayed under the plane tree by the ivy-covered grave, was very lovely—such a blue, kind sky and laughing earth, with



spring flowers everywhere. The slopes of the down above were as dewy as some upland Alpine meadow. In my mind I repeated, "And death once dead there's no more dying then." "

The death of Dr. Symonds led to several important changes for Symonds and his family. His sister Charlotte was married from No. 7 Victoria Square, on July 1, to T. H. Green, of Balliol College; and, later in the year, Symonds moved into his old home of Clifton Hill House, a place so full of memories for him.

The change from Victoria Square to Clifton Hill House coincides with an important development in Symonds's literary career. He was just on the point of appearing before the world as an avowed author by the publication of his 'Introduction to the Study of Dante,' and here it will be fitting to introduce his own estimate of his Intellectual and Literary Evolution.]

Since<sup>1</sup> I have reached the point of my embarking on the great wide sea of literature, it is right that I should attempt to form some estimate of my natural and acquired faculties for this branch of art.

From nature I derived a considerable love of books, an active brain, a fairly extended curiosity, receptivity to ideas above the average, an aptitude for expression, sensibility to external objects in the world of things, and intense emotional susceptibility of a limited and rather superficial kind.

My power of application was always small. What patience I now possess in the acquisition of knowledge, or in the exercise of my talents, has been gained with difficulty. Quick and intelligent at the outset, I grew very slowly, and arrived comparatively late at the control of my faculties for any definite purpose. The large part of my early years was spent apparently in ineffectual dreaming.

Few people are contented with their memory, because all of us feel the inevitable limitations of a faculty on which we are continually making extraordinary demands. The more we have of it the more we expect from it, and yet at the same

<sup>1</sup> Autobiography.

time there are few who train it systematically. In my own case I am certain that my memory was originally weak and unreliable. I remembered nothing definitely which I had not either seen or acutely felt. Names, dates, numbers, historical events entered my mind with facility, abode there for a short space under the control of a deliberate volition, and vanished again as though I had never possessed them. I could get a subject up with tolerable ease, but I could not retain my knowledge of it. This gave me some advantage for preparing for examinations, but like the sieve used in the story of the Forty Thieves, my memory caught in its meshes a piece of gold here and there. Having an active brain and a lively curiosity, I was always acquiring information, while the defect of my retentive power made me continually lose the larger portion of it. Yet in this way my intellectual furniture grew to be a vague, ill-digested, inaccurate mass, rich in possibilities, but poor in solid stuff. I have never been able to overcome the congenital inferiority of my brain in these respects. Yet being aware of the deficiency, and resolving to make the best of things, which might be worse or better, I learned to utilise the strength and to supplement the weakness of my memory. I saturate my mind with rapid reading, devour multitudes of books, and made voluminous notes, feeling sure that I shall obtain a general conception of the subject under consideration. Then I return again and again to the leading documents, check every impression of fact by reiterated comparison of my notes with their sources, verify dates and quotations, force myself to attain accuracy by drudgery. Few writers, I take it, have undergone so much preparatory labour as I am obliged to go through.

For numbers I have absolutely no head. I do not visualise except in the most rudimentary way. At best I can see the digits scrawled upon a slate. I am unable to remember the multiplication table; and it is notorious in my family that I constantly make mistakes between a ten and a hundred, a hundred and a thousand, so feeble is my grasp upon the symbol *O*. If I have not been involved in pecuniary difficulties, it is because I am conscious of this imbecility, and refer on

every occasion to written memoranda. The same consciousness made me, early in life, scale my expenditure considerably below my income, in order that I might always have a fair margin of cash to fall back on.

I cannot learn anything systematically. Grammar, logic, political economy, the exact sciences, offered insuperable obstacles to my mind. The result is, that I know nothing thoroughly; and I do not think this is so much due to laziness as to cerebral incapacity. My brain was always impenetrable to abstractions. When I attacked them, I felt a dull resistance, a sense of benumbed and benumbing stupor stealing like a fog over my intellect. I have had to circumvent abstractions, to present them in the concrete, and to return upon them by the path of metaphor or symbol before I was able to approach them in the form of pure thought.

I have observed that visible objects—forms, colours, aspects of nature, faces, buildings, statues, pictures—leave a keen and durable impression on my sensibility. What I have once regarded with curiosity I retain. And more than that, I remember the atmosphere of these things, the feeling they exhale, their specific quality so far as I am able to perceive it. This has helped me in the line of graphic writing, and has given me such certainty of truth as I possess.

The same may be said of the other senses—touch, taste, hearing, and smell—but in a less degree. In spite, however, of this retentive receptivity to objects of sense, I am not strong in the faculty of observation—that quality which makes the novelist, the man of science, and the higher artist. Perhaps I lack patience or interest in things for their own sakes. What I observe and treasure up comes to me casually, by no premeditated effort, but because it attracts me, and is correlated to my tastes or sympathies.

Emotional states, whether painfully poignant or fragile in their evanescent lightness, I remember with unerring accuracy. This, I think, has been useful to me in the exercise of criticism. I possess a certainty with regard to past conditions of feeling, which I find valuable when attempting to pronounce judgment upon works of art or literature, or to recall the sentiment

evoked by places. At the same time, just as I am no deliberate observer, I cannot claim to be an analyst of emotion. Retentive receptivity is the quality I claim. Combined with a moderate estimate of my own powers and a fair share of common sense, together with an active curiosity, this receptive and retentive susceptibility to various objects and emotions has given a certain breadth, a certain catholicity, a certain commonplace-ness to my æsthetic conclusions.

My powers of expression were considerable, yet not of first-rate quality. Vaughan at Harrow told me the truth when he said that my besetting sin was 'fatal facility.' I struggled long to conquer fluency. Still, I have not succeeded. I find a pleasure in expression for its own sake ; but I have not the inevitable touch of the true poet, the unconquerable patience of the conscious artist. As in other matters, so here, I tried to make the best of my defects. Concentration lies beyond my grasp. The right words do not fall into the right places at my bidding. I have written few good paragraphs, and possibly no single perfect line. I strove, however, to control the qualities I knew myself to have, to train and curb them, to improve them by attention to the details of style. If I have achieved any success in literature, the secret of that success lies in persistent effort, combined with a steady determination to preserve the spirit of delight in labour and the spontaneity of self.

Of moral qualities exercised in the same field of work I may claim the following :—First, humility, developed by the sense of insufficiency which over-clouded my earliest efforts. Secondly, pride and self-respect, developed during the same period of baffled aspirations. Blending their forces, these qualities rendered me comparatively cold about the future of my books, contented to compose for my own pleasure in a spirit half-sanguine and half-pessimistic. I have never expected success or been fretful when I did not get it ; never cared very much for praise or blame ; never curried favour or sought to disarm opposition. In the third place, I think I may ascribe to myself justice and open-mindedness, enabling me to take a wide survey of the fields I had to traverse. But

perhaps this virtue is rather the outcome of indifference than an active sense of what is righteous. Fourthly, I have been gifted with obstinacy in the face of physical and other disadvantages. This might also be described as courage or tenacity, or a determination to make the best of things, or a want of fastidiousness, impelling me to push my work forward in spite of obstacles, and without caring greatly how much it suffered owing to adverse circumstances. Experience of life, often extremely bitter, at times unexpectedly blissful, has taught me that there is nothing extraordinarily great in the greatest of achievements, nothing mean in the meanest of occupations ; briefly, that human life is not to be estimated by what men perform, but by what they are.

The period of six years, between November 1862, when my health broke down at Magdalen, and November 1868, when we went to live at Clifton, forms the second main division of my literary life. What I managed to do was done under great difficulties and in a desultory fragmentary manner. Moving from one place to another, without access to libraries, and always in depressed health, I could not undertake any important work or engage in any regular scheme of study. Intellectually I lived from hand to mouth. The weakness of my eyes rendered systematic reading impossible, and I depended, in a great measure, upon my wife's unfailing kindness. She read aloud to me for hours together. Curiously enough, the lung troubles, which now threatened my very existence, seemed to relieve the misery of the brain. Gradually that organ regained tone, although I suffered frequently from attacks which proved that the disorder had not been lived down. Sustained mental labour was out of the question. I worked by fits and snatches.

Not having the strength for what the French call a 'work of long breath,' I contented myself with swallow-flights. I wrote a great deal for the 'Cornhill,' the 'Pall Mall Gazette,' the 'North British,' and the 'Westminster.' In this way I composed some of my Italian sketches—'Orvieto,' 'The Cornice,' 'Siena and S. Catherine,' 'Ajaccio,' 'Christmas in Rome,' 'The Love of the Alps,' 'Provençal Towns,' 'Ravenna,' and



others which have been incorporated with the productions of a later period. They were transcribed almost literally from the diaries I kept during our winter and spring wanderings. Some of the studies of Greek poets also belong to this time. Among these I may mention 'Aristophanes,' 'Empedocles,' 'The Idyllists,' 'The Gnostic Poets.' I also wrote those essays on the English dramatists of which I have already spoken. My little book on Ben Jonson in the 'English Worthies' series is mainly a *rifacimento* of the elaborate study I then made of him. Much time was wasted upon a translation of Zeller's history of Aristotle and the Aristotelian school. This I undertook at Jowett's suggestion. Jowett, I may say in passing, had a singular way of setting his friends to do work undoubtedly useful, but for which they are not suited. To make me translate Zeller, instead of Cellini or Boccaccio, was nothing short of a *gaucherie*. I found it intolerably irksome. I did it abominably ill. It retarded the recovery of my eyesight, and when it was done I abandoned it as worthless.

Bad health and perpetual change of place forced me to fritter my energies away. Yet the peculiar conditions of my life were not without some counterbalancing advantages. I learned, in that long tract of weariness and leisure, that *λίαν σχολή* as Prometheus called his time on Caucasus, to take a just measure of man's endeavour in the world. Enforced abstinence and baffled ambition implanted in me a wise indifference, a stoical sense of *ἀδιαφορία*. I said to myself: '*Entbehren sollst du; sollst entbehren.*' I saw contemporaries pass me in the race of life; and taught myself not to envy this man's strength or that man's skill. In a word, the stern school of adversity delivered me from many pettinesses. In a genial, if somewhat scornful, mood, I determined to do what I could, however little and however worthless that might be. I wrote for distraction, for enjoyment, for myself; and did not cumber my soul with what society or critics thought about me. Hampered by so many disabilities, I slowly but surely emancipated my soul from academical and middle-class prejudices. The callings and the works of men



appointed to different places in the world, assumed proper proportions in my tired and disillusioned eyes. To wear the poet's crown, to win the fame of the scholar, seemed to me on a par with driving a straight furrow through the corn-land, or steering a ship to port through perilous waters under stormy skies. I was disciplined into democracy with all its sympathies and all its hauteur. Moreover, in proportion as I ceased to study systematically, I learned to think and feel originally. In my prostration I grew to be self-confident (without losing humility). Daily experience told me what a slight difference there is between a man handicapped as I was, and a man as privileged as Southey. I mention Southey, because he is the sort of man of letters I might have become if I had not been thwarted by circumstance. On a lower level, it was no small gain to acquire the knack of pursuing my studies, such as they were, in hotels, in railway carriages, on steamboats, in lodgings, in lonely Alpine chalets. The life of the spirit, a thin thread, it is true, but tough and elastic, was carried on continuously under conditions which would have appalled an armchair-student, or the *habitué* of a public library. What the Italians call *sprezzatura* sustained me. I adored beauty, I enjoyed mental energy, but I held opinion, as Farinata held hell, in *gran dispetto*. Then there was the close communion with nature in many fascinating and appealing places. This surely was some equivalent for the loss of methodical investigation, of physical vigour, of combative ambition, and of opportunities for strenuous study. Lastly, I ought not to neglect the benefit derived by a man of my temperament from the slow, dumb, imbibition of a few books—Whitman, Theocritus, Shelley, Wordsworth, Milton, Marlowe, Dante, Browne—in hours of inertia, face to face with Mediterranean seas or Alpine summits.

## CHAPTER XI

## MANHOOD—EMBARKED ON LITERATURE

At Clifton Hill House—Civic duties—Publishes his first book, 'An Introduction to the Study of Dante'—Dr. Symonds's 'Miscellanies'—Conington's 'Remains'—Experience under Anæsthetics—Journey to Sicily and Athens—Impressions of Greece—Home again—Fall from his horse—'Studies of the Greek Poets'—Its reception—Sent abroad again—Gathers material for the History of the Renaissance—'Sketches in Italy and Greece'—Great literary activity—The first volume of 'The Renaissance'—Failure of health—Sent abroad—Michael Angelo's and Campanella's Sonnets—Breaks down.

1871. I<sup>1</sup> HAD promised my father, before he died, to make Clifton Hill House my home; but we resolved to postpone our settling there until the end of the summer.

It seems unfilial, almost impious, to say so, yet it is true that the independence I now acquired added a decided stimulus to my mental growth. My father had been so revered and so implicitly obeyed by me that his strong personal influence kept me in something like childish subjection. I did nothing without consulting him; and when I was unable to repress those parts of my nature with which he could not sympathise, I resorted to subterfuge, half-measures, and concealments. Left without him, I had to act for myself, and insensibly I became more manly.

The events of the following years, in so far as they are not connected with my rapidly expanding literary energies, might be summed up in a series of foreign journeys and a succession of civic duties. I was elected to my father's place upon the Council of Clifton College. I helped to found the Bristol University. I acted as secretary to an Invalid Ladies' Home

<sup>1</sup> Autobiography

at Clifton, and sat on the committee for Promoting the Higher Education of Women. I connected myself with the Liberal politicians of the city. Of public business and of social intercourse I had enough and to spare during that period; and considering the rate at which I read and wrote, as is proved by my publications, I was burning the candle always at both ends.

It has always touched me with a thrill of pathos to think that my good, kind father died before I came before the world as an avowed author. His ambition for his only son had been checked and thwarted. He had suffered deeply by my failure in health at the close of a brilliant academical career. Yet he never uttered one peevish word to make me feel his disappointment. Shortly before his death, he expressed to me his conviction, that I would never acquire the physical force to do anything like solid work. 'You have one of those constitutions,' he said, 'with just enough nervous strength for the common requirements of life. You cannot draw upon the fund of energy without imperilling your health.' In fact he had resigned all expectation of my making a mark in the world, and herein he was amply justified, for I had now reached my thirty-first year, with nothing to show but a somewhat misty reputation as a writer of articles. Yet what I still contained of slumbering force was now on the point of bursting out into sudden activity. And nobody would have watched the efforts of the next eighteen years, with more sympathy and satisfaction, than my father would have done. Modest as my achievement may have been, I am sure it would have gratified his fatherly pride, and have compensated in his old age for the disappointment of the past. '*Dis aliter visum est.*' And so strangely are we mortals made, that God forgive me if I do not believe my father's watchful supervision would have hampered my energy. He exerted an extraordinary influence over those who came within his sphere. Always benevolently exercised, this was none the less despotic. I doubt whether I could have written as freely, and published as spontaneously, as I have done, had I been conscious of his criticism.

Anyhow, the year of his death coincided with a new and far more energetic phase of my literary life. For the rest of that

1872.

year things went forward much as usual. In the spring of 1872, however, I made arrangements for publishing my lectures on Dante under the title of 'An Introduction to the Study of Dante.' The book was favourably received upon the whole, and added to my reputation. At the same time, I collected and published a volume of my father's 'Miscellanies' (Arrow-smith, Bristol, & Macmillan), and prepared Conington's 'Remains,' in two volumes, for the press (Longmans). Both of these latter works I scamped, not wilfully or culpably, but because I was still indifferent to the technique of literature. I allowed my own articles to scramble into print as they could, neglecting proofs, and not resenting misprints which would now make my blood boil and the hair bristle on my head.

[While engaged upon this work, Symonds wrote thus to Mr. Dakyns from Sutton Court:]

'It' is wonderfully beautiful in the country now. The apple orchards are covered with pink and white bloom, and the farm gardens are ablaze with tulips. But the real charm is in the meadows and the hedges. One does not know whether to fill one's hands with cowslips and orchises, or to sink into a tangle of delicate fine grasses, from which bluebells here and there tower up and starwort speckles the green with white. These things, together with the cawing of rooks and the sound of a stream tumbling over the stones and the scent of wall-flowers and early roses, send me to sleep.

'I wonder whether we shall realise Venice this autumn. Lying half asleep, I dream that we have reached Geneva hot and dusty, and are gone to spend two nights at Glion—hot sunlight blazing on the shield of water below, a silver shield by day, a copper shield at sunset, and at night a steel-mirror dotted with stars. Then I dream of a day's journey to the hills beneath Zermatt. I have heard of a pass that avoids Visp and that part of the Valais. The Moro makes another dream; and I loiter a little time at Macugnaga, and cross the Baranca and get to Fobello, and see the Sacro Monte at

<sup>1</sup> To H. G. Dakyns. Sutton Court, May 3, 1872.

Varallo, and ride across the Colma between chestnut branches and soft turf, and row over the little lake to Orta, and climb the Duomo of Milan at daybreak, and at last I dream myself into Venice itself. Then I seem to wake up, for when you are at Venice it is like being in a dream, and when you dream about Venice it is like being awake. I do not know how this should be, but Venice seems made to prove that "*La Vita è un sogno*." What the Venice dream is all the world knows. Motion that is almost imperceptible, colour too deep and gorgeous to strike the eye, gilding so massive and ancient as to wear a mist of amber brown upon its brightness, white cupolas that time has turned to pearls, marble that no longer looks like stone, but like blocks cut from summer clouds, a smooth sea that is brighter and more infinite than the sky it reflects—these are some of the ingredients of the dream which are too familiar for description. Nothing can describe the elemental warmth of the days, the sea-kisses of the wind at evening, the atmosphere of breathless tepid moonlight in the night. Some people dislike this part of the dream. It just suits me—only I dream of myself in it as dressed in almost nothing and very lazy.'

[The way in which Symonds took unfavourable notices of his first book is described in this letter to Mr. Henry Sidgwick:]

'I<sup>1</sup> will by this post send you a copy of my book on Dante, in order to get the priceless precious gift you promise, which I shall obtain at a wondrous cheap price if the "*Athenæum*" is right about my poor little volume. I have always wanted to know what were the sensations of an author who seasoned his breakfast with the perusal of a well-peppered review of his first book. I have this morning experienced the emotions peculiar to this condition, but, I fear, not with sufficient unselfconsciousness for exactly learning what I wished to learn. I kept saying to myself: "That's a hard hit"; "That's spiteful"; "I wonder whether it is making me twitch and shrink in the

<sup>1</sup> To Henry Sidgwick. Clifton, Dec. 1, 1872.

right way." But I expect that I had a pretty fair experience on the whole.

'It is so disheartening to have bad health and a bad memory, and not in one's literary work to be able to attain by any labour to *Gründlichkeit* and *Genauigkeit*. I do not like uttering to you these little bat squeaks of a Troglodytic creature; and I am often so happy on my horse, scampering at full gallop over the downs, so very happy when I am translating Poliziano into English verse, and very tranquil when I am hugging my baby.'

[Symonds's health was still in a very precarious state. As he says himself: 'It was only by tours abroad that I kept myself from a physical collapse.' In the late summer of 1872 he had taken a journey to Switzerland and Venice with  
1873 Mr. Moor; and in February of 1873, he was forced to place himself in the hands of a dentist, with results which he describes in the following remarkable letter to Mr. Sidgwick :]

'I<sup>1</sup> have a strange, deep, inexplicable power of suffering that belongs not to natures more finely strung than the average, I think, but to those which require for their mere existence some frequent tasting of the *après jouissances* of mere nature—savage and bitter to the taste. All the sweet refined fruits, the grapes and the peaches, of poetry and art, are mine; and I care not for them one jot, if I may not press from time to time against my lips the sharp, rough husk of the wild drupe. As I must not pluck and taste these wilding berries, I pine with a distempered appetite, and am cloyed with over suavity.

'I am going to write out for you the account of a curious psychological experience I had the other day. On Tuesday I was put under the influence of chloroform and laughing gas together. I felt no pain; but my consciousness seemed complete, and I was occupied with the strange thoughts which you shall read. Tell me what you think about it. If this had happened to a man in an uncritical age, would it not have

<sup>1</sup> To Henry Sidgwick. Clifton, Feb. 20, 1873.



carried conviction, like that of Saul of Tarsus, to his soul? A violent deepening of despair—a sense of being mocked and cheated—remains with me.'

[Then follows Symonds's account of this experience.]

'After the choking and stifling of the chloroform had passed away, I seemed at first in a state of utter blankness: then came flashes of intense light, alternating with blackness, and with a keen vision of what was going on in the room round me, but no sensation of touch. I thought that I was near death; when, suddenly, my soul became aware of God, who was manifestly dealing with me, handling me, so to speak, in an intense personal present reality. I felt Him streaming in like light upon me, and heard Him saying in no language, but as hands touch hands and communicate sensation, "I led you, I guided you; you will never sin, and weep, and wail in madness any more; for, now, you have seen Me." My whole consciousness seemed brought into one point of absolute conviction; the independence of my mind from my body was proved by the phenomena of this acute sensibility to spiritual facts, this utter deadness of the senses; Life and Death seemed mere names, for what was there then but my soul and God, two indestructible existences in close relation. I could reason a little, to this extent that I said: "Some have said they were convinced by miracles and spirit-rapping, but my conviction is a real new sense." I also felt God saying: "I have suffered you to feel sin and madness, to ache and be abandoned, in order that now you might know and gladly greet Me. Did you think the anguish of the last few days and this experience you are undergoing were fortuitous coincidences?" I cannot describe the ecstasy I felt. Then as I gradually awoke from the influence of the anæsthetics, the old sense of my relation to the world began to return, the new sense of my relation to God began to fade. I suddenly leapt to my feet on the chair where I was sitting, and shrieked out: "It is too horrible, it is too horrible, it is too horrible," meaning that I could not bear this disillusionment. Then I flung myself on the ground, and

at last awoke covered with blood, calling to the two surgeons (who were frightened), "Why did you not kill me? Why would you not let me die?" Only think of it. To have felt for that long dateless ecstasy of vision the very God, in all purity and tenderness and truth and absolute love, and then to find that I had after all had no revelation, but that I had been tricked by the abnormal excitement of my brain.

'Yet, this question remains : Is it possible that the inner sense of reality which succeeded, when my flesh was dead to impressions from without, to the ordinary sense of physical relations, was not a delusion but an actual experience? It is possible that I, in that moment, felt what some of the saints have said they always felt, the undemonstrable but irrefragable certainty of God?'

[In the spring of 1873, Symonds went with his wife to Sicily and Athens.

'Athens is not only the most spirit-shaking, but the most purely beautiful place that exists. Here, one feels all that one divined in England of the Greek spirit. It is pure light, serenity, harmony, balance, definition, nothing too large, too crushing, but all human and beautiful, and fit for the cradle of the free Logos.'

So wrote Symonds to Mr. Dakyns, when at Corfu on his way home. The rich impressions of this journey were published in the first of the three series of 'Travel-Sketches,' inaugurated in 1874.

After reaching England again the Symondses spent some time together with Miss S. F. Alleyne in North Wales. On their return from this journey Symonds fell in a fainting fit from the saddle of his horse, while riding at full gallop on the Durdham Downs. He writes of the accident to his sister thus :]

'I<sup>1</sup> should like to tell you myself about an accident which happened to me on Friday, and which you may have heard of

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte. Clifton, Sept. 19, 1873,

I was galloping my horse near the Sea Walls, when I fainted and fell off backwards on to my head on the ground. Partly through the faintness, and partly through the stunning, I remained insensible for nearly an hour, and was carried by my two old college pupils, Pearson and Nash, into that house close by the Sea Walls, which you may remember. They got Dr. Fox from Clifton, and then brought me home, with no bones broken or other injuries, thank God, but with a terribly shaken brain.

‘I am told that I must attribute the cause of this accident to weakness from overwork; and I suppose this is true. Though what surprises me is, that for the last month I have been feeling more and more able to command my strength for mental labour.

‘It seems, however, not to be my lot in life to be able to work while it is yet day; and Heaven knows how difficult I find it to keep my mind healthy when I am not working. In this way, by buffets and jerks, one comes at last to the great silence, I suppose, where all ends.’

‘I<sup>1</sup> fear I wrote to you in a querulous and desponding tone before. In truth I do find it a hard trial to be thrown down again, and by a blow which seems to carry the menace of indefinite difficulties in the future. But I have many deep sources of self-consolation. Foremost is the hope that either I may recover strength enough to live as earnestly for the nobler purposes as I wish, or else that I may now be too weak to retain a thought or care for what is less worthy of a man. The worst that could happen to me would be to retain physical strength and the power of locomotion, &c. (so as to have idleness and the capacity for filling it up badly), while mentally enfeebled and morally harassed. This is a sort of nightmare from which I have hitherto found escape in literary labour.

‘I do not so much regret my work. Other men can easily do as well and better what I have set myself to do, and if they do not, the world will not suffer. No; I had hoped to make

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte, Clifton, Sept. 1873.

my work the means of saving my soul, and therefore I loved it.'

[While Symonds was upon his travels, his 'Studies of the Greek Poets' had been going through the press. He had left the manuscript ready for printing, and soon after his return the volume appeared. 'The success of the book,' he writes in his Autobiography, 'was marked,' and he expresses his satisfaction in the following letter to Mr. Dakyns:]

'We<sup>1</sup> came yesterday to London, and in a small way I found myself famous. Miss North had asked Newton, the explorer of Cnidus and Halicarnassus, Poole, the keeper of the British Museum coins, Frank Galton, the Russell Gurneys, who have just returned from Washington, and others to meet us, and I was made to talk about the Greeks. I do not know what stimulating and invigorating effect it produces to meet with people, respectable in their several lines, who regard one as an authority in one's own. But it seems to brace me, to draw me together to a point, and to make me feel the duty of self-culture more. It is no longer satisfactory to set down vague thoughts in a pleasant way for my own delectation. It becomes a duty to acquire more precision and extension of thought. At the same time, there is an accession of strength.'

'But<sup>2</sup> the main event of the year was the composition of a long series of lectures on "The Renaissance in Italy." This formed the kernel of my future labours.'

[The results of the fall at Clifton were still serious. His friend and physician, Dr. Beddoe, had advised him to travel again. It was the only way of keeping him from study. He was on his way abroad when he wrote the preceding letter. He had engaged a Courmayeur man as servant—Jean Tairraz by name; and in his company voyaged from Southampton to Malta, visited Tunis and Sicily, and returned by Naples, Rome, Perugia, Florence and Cannes.

Symonds's mental and emotional attitude is shown in the following letters. His attention was already engaged upon

<sup>1</sup> To H. G. Dakyns. Oct. 29, 1873.

<sup>2</sup> Autobiography.

the History of the Renaissance, and throughout this journey he gathered material for his work.]

‘I<sup>1</sup> fear I shall not see you at Cannes. I should have liked to linger in Umbria and Tuscany until you reached the Riviera, and then to have joined you: for my life in this middle region of Italy is most delightful. My long study of the country gives me a firm hold on everything: I see nothing that does not fortify or correct some opinion, or help to give colour to some description. And I can work so well. I read chronicles and histories and biographies on the very spot where the events happened, and make notes for future use which have the juice of life in them. I have benefited by the journey, and here at least I am not bored. But before I touched the shore of Italy—*i.e.* in Malta, at Tunis, and in Sicily, and on innumerable steamers—I was a little bored, and thought the whole thing a sell. But I must break this fair life short. O Italy! How much more we owe to you than to Germany. This is what I want to make the world see; but I fear it is rather like preaching the excellent qualities of their grandmother to them.

‘The only thing that annoys me here is the *défaut de mes qualités*. I am a poet, and poets have special sufferings. My sympathy with the people I see about makes me understand them in a kind of odd intuitive way and desire their company. But I cannot get close to them. I am like a statue walking among men. As a form of art, their life is mine. It is I who know all about their historical antecedents. It is I who have set their songs to English cadences. But if I tried to reach them they would find me unintelligible. This is the great grief of a poet: his agony of longing is a condition of his sensibility. See on this subject Browning’s “Cleon.” And all this goes deeper still. You are right in saying that nature has given me great facility in acquisition and production. But with this there is a curse—the corresponding quickness and keenness of emotion that perforce must lose itself in longing. What I suffer I only know. And when this emotion becomes

<sup>1</sup> To Henry Sidgwick. Cortona, Dec. 15, 1873.

blunt, I shall know, not that I am freed, but that I am dying ; for these intense pains are a condition of vitality in me. It is all this which makes me alternate between feverish and voracious work and exhausted idleness. I have intervals of clairvoyance and intervals of stagnant blindness.

‘I hope to be one of the readers of your book—for this reason : my meditations of late, carried on at night, mostly between sea and sky, after reading bits of Helmholtz’s Lectures, which I have with me, make me believe that on the method of ethics will depend the future of the human race. One such discovery as Newton’s law of gravitation in the field of morals would advance us æons forward in all that concerns spiritual life. We beat about the bush so long because we have not found the scientific starting-point of ethics. This is what I meant when I said in my Greek book that Science was to be our deliverer.’

[Another aspect of his emotions is expressed in the following terms :]

‘Je<sup>1</sup> ne pourrais pas te dire combien j’ai souffert et combien j’ai joui pendant ces huit semaines de voyage—mais toujours, tu l’entendras bien, par la seule pensée. La pensée dans cette solitude est devenue plus que jamais ma vie tout entière, ma consolation et mon tourment, la cause de toutes mes maladies et au même temps la seule santé dont je puisse jouir. Rompre les liens du rêve et devenir un homme agissant dans le milieu des faits réels, c’est ce qui m’est maintenant et pour toujours impossible. Cet atroce magicien, l’Atlante de la pensée, m’a enfermé, comme auparavant Ruggiero dans son palais, qu’il n’a formé que d’air, mais duquel les murailles sont infranchissables. Puis je travaille toujours à mon livre. Je veux approfondir l’esprit de la Renaissance italienne. Et comme dit Georges Sand, travailler pour la gloire est au même temps un rôle d’empereur et un métier de forçat. C’est en effet une vie bien dure. La surexcitation de toutes les facultés intellectuelles, la détente continuelle de l’imagination, le travail de la sympathie,

<sup>1</sup> To H. G. Dakyns. Savona, Dec. 21, 1873.



poussent à la manie et produisent des chutes inexplicables d'en haut des sommités de l'idéal jusque dans les bourbiers de la fantaisie le plus tristement ridicules. Je ne pourrais pas t'écrire toute la vérité en rapport de ces dégringolades bizarres et baroques. Un Méphistophèle cynique se mêle là-dedans pour produire des métamorphoses de la pensée tourmentée. Tu sais que les liaisons formées par le hasard tout seul sont ce qu'il y a de plus agréable dans les voyages. Comme disait Stendhal : "Tout est découverte, tout est grâce. Il n'y a pas de lien." Mais le mélancolique penseur, tant qu'il soit un peu poète, porte dans ces liaisons son désespérant "au grand sérieux." Il veut que la bonne chance lui apporte quelque forte sensation voulue d'avance, conçue dans son cerveau travaillé par les passions de la fantaisie. Il ne veut pas simplement jouir de la bonne aventure, mais se créer une réalité correspondante à ses rêves. Alors il brise l'être fragile du moment, ou bien il ne se sent pas assez de force pour faire éclore ces fleurs aux odeurs enivrantes qu'il entrevoit sur la tige ombragée que la fortune lui apporte. Et si par hasard il a de l'esprit, il voit qu'il n'y a rien de plus ridicule que de chercher toujours des acteurs dans un drame qu'il a conçu de longue main dans sa pensée malade. Il faudrait être grand artiste pour tirer du marbre de la réalité cette forme de la pure fantaisie—de se faire un poème d'une aventure banale.

'CANNES, *December 26*.—In the middle of my last laborious sentence I had to stop short. This stopping short, breaking threads of thought and fancy, is the real merit of travelling. I hope to be home soon. It is very lovely here; but I am weary. I have read and thought more than I usually do during the last month.'

[The period which followed the return from this journey, in which, as the letters show, Symonds had been strongly stirred in intellect and emotions, was one of almost feverish literary activity. The fruits of his journeys, so far as they bore upon the Renaissance, were now to be garnered, ready for use, and he describes himself as 'working very hard in my study at Clifton Hill House, and filling four or five thick books of

manuscript with fervid declamation.' But the strain was severe, as the following letters prove :]

1874 'I<sup>1</sup> fear the whole horizon is changed for me, as usual. Almost from the date I saw you in London I have been ill. I had to give up my visit to Eton, and on arriving here to take to bed. Bronchitis began the mischief, and the last three days have been one protracted torment. I sometimes wonder whether there are many men thwarted as much as I am by a series of Protean small ailments ; and then I wonder with a sort of vanity how many of the kind do as much as I do. I have managed in this illness to write a long poem in *ottava rima* on an Italian story, another in *terza rima* of a ghastly kind, an elaborate essay on Heywood's plays, a notice of Brome's dramatic works, and a portion of an essay on the Italian Republics of the Renaissance. But it is killing work. I say to myself, like Macbeth, "At least we'll die with harness on our back."

'Some men waste their life in the boredom of dull routine duties, others in the accumulation of money they are too tired to enjoy, others in the pursuit of pleasure that is never grasped, others in sickness. And yet all, if they have any manliness, do some pieces of imperishable work, in passion or in labour. By the way, is it this by-seed that saves us ?'

'I<sup>2</sup> have been ailing in health ever since the day I saw you in London ; and till I can get to Switzerland, home is really the best place for me. Catherine and I made out a little visit to Lynton last week, which we should have thoroughly enjoyed if I had not been so weak. I was thankful to return on Tuesday, and to feel that I could creep about my own rooms half asleep again.

'These chest colds do not agree with sober work, but they do not exactly disagree with some sorts of irregular intellectual activity. So I have been in a blaze of poetry of late—reading and writing.

<sup>1</sup> To Henry Sidgwick. Clifton, March 10, 1874.

<sup>2</sup> To the same. Clifton, April 30, 1874.

‘I should not wonder if I published a volume of poems after all.

‘I hope you got my last immortal work. I told Smith to send you a copy; and in this envelope, if I can find one, I will send you a sonnet which I wrote as a dedication of the book to Catherine. Miss Thackeray, writing from Freshwater, says she has shown it to Tennyson, who approves—long-suffering old bard.

‘I am going to lecture again this term to the Clifton College boys. How it will agree with my lungs I do not quite know, but I must try.

‘I have enough of general sympathy for young souls left to like it.’

‘I<sup>1</sup> am reading “Bothwell” whenever I feel I have any brains to read with, which is not often in many days. It is surely a wonderful work of art. I do not think anything greater has been produced in our age, in spite of its inordinate length and strange affectation of style. However, one reads oneself into a sympathy with his use of language, and then the sustained effort of thought and imagination is overpowering in its splendour. It seems to me the most virile exercise of the poetic power in combination with historic accuracy that our literature of this century can show.

‘My first volume, on the Political and Social Conditions of the Renaissance in Italy, is just all but finished. The arts, the literature, the discovery of the antique, and the beginnings of philosophy under the form of scholarship, have yet to be done, perhaps two volumes more.’

[Symonds records his literary activity during this period in the following words :]

This<sup>2</sup> year, 1874, saw the publication of my ‘Sketches in Italy and Greece.’ These were reprints from magazines, together with pieces extracted from my Diary. The article on Perugia, for instance, which now appeared for the first time,

<sup>1</sup> To Henry Sidgwick. Glenthorne, June 29, 1874.

<sup>2</sup> Autobiography.

had been written at Arezzo in the previous December. I remember how cold and dismal the Tuscan inn-room was, and how my blood burned while I sat scribbling till the manuscript was finished. I ought to say that in this year I began to work for the 'Fortnightly Review,' at John Morley's express request. He had been struck by the 'Greek Poets.' I also joined the 'Academy' newspaper, to which I promised my work gratis; and nothing that I sent there has been paid for.

1875 In 1875 I published the first volume of 'The Renaissance in Italy.' It was entirely rewritten from lectures; and the defect of the method is clearly observable in its structure. I believe that I should not have obtained the initiative for a ponderous work unless I had begun by lecturing. The irritability of my brain rendered me peculiarly intolerant of sustained labour. But a rhetorical tone survived my best attempts to rehandle the material which had been designed for declamation. Changes of style and purple patches deformed the unity and gravity of a serious historical work. Relief from thoughts which had become intolerable had to be sought in brain-labour. That being so, I did not sufficiently count the cost, or approach my theme in a calm artistic spirit. This origin of my *magnum opus* is hinted at in sonnets called 'Envoy to a Book' in 'Vagabunduli Libellus.'

I worked furiously, recklessly, at this period, devouring books upon Italian history, art, scholarship, and literature, writing continually, and pushing one volume forward while another was going through the press. The same year, 1875, I sent out the second volume of 'Studies of Greek Poets,' a large number of which were prepared from lectures, or written expressly to fill up gaps in the series. The last essay in this volume on the Greek spirit was a first attempt to deal philosophically with moral and religious problems.

[In the midst of all this vigorous production, it is interesting to observe Symonds's attitude towards criticism and his public, as he expresses it in the following passages:]

'I<sup>1</sup> am so habitually more moved by passionate impulses,

<sup>1</sup> To Henry Sidgwick. Jan. 26, 1875.

that I dare say I do not truly comprehend your attitude about writing and study. I cannot quite picture to myself a man who has done this, and will not for the love of the thing, *con amore*, do more—moved by Erôs, only son of Penia and Poros.

‘I think it is dangerous to attach importance to the opinion of people in print or otherwise, except in matters of personal prudence, good taste, and so forth. The real thing is to discover if you enjoy literary work. You will not cumber the world with books more than you do already with your body, and oblivion covers both quickly as far as both are perishable.

‘For a man to do what he likes best is the right course, since his liking is the surest sign of his capacity—far surer than the estimate of critics or of friends. Love is the only law. This is the one great gospel that is true.’

In <sup>1</sup> the spring of 1875, my wife and I set forth again for Rome, Amalfi, Capri—lovely wanderings, of which a pale shadow remains in my sketches. In the summer of the year I again betook myself to the Rhone Valley, Bel Alp and Chamonix with the two Dakynses. Here I worked hard at the second volume of my ‘Renaissance in Italy.’ In the winter of 1875–76, my health, as usual, began to fail. Dr. Beddoe recommended me to go to the Riviera. My wife and I accordingly settled at San Remo in February. There I wrote a large part of the second volume of my ‘Renaissance in Italy.’

[On his return to England Symonds spent some time in London :]

‘Since <sup>2</sup> we left Clifton last Saturday week we have had a 1876 curious mixed eventful life, of which if I cannot render some idea to you, as I feel impelled to do, I shall not send this letter.

‘It is increasingly strange to me to notice how existence

<sup>1</sup> Autobiography.

<sup>2</sup> To H. G. Dakyns. London, May 31, 1876.

proceeds by jerks—*staccato* movements, *saccadé* emphasis—violent revolutions of subjective tone from extreme quiescence to febrile excitement and back again, and all the while how the internal self obeys its own forlorn laws, remaining within the cage of prescribed limitations. This contrast between the many-motived exterior machine of circumstance and the inflexible interior monotony is a matter too deep for tears or sighs, when the individual has no ulterior point like God, or an idea whereby to steer his course. “Unstable as water thou shalt not excel,” seems to me a motto painfully applicable, and yet shallow in its inadequacy to reach the central point of instability—the self that apprehends so many things and seizes none, that sets its final stake on no one square of all the chequer board, but moves from square to square irresolute and eager.

‘Now it seems to me that in this preamble I have said all I had to say; for of bright luminous pictures, detaching themselves against a grey background, I have none to give. In many directions I have seen and heard and experienced things which the uncritical would call remarkable and the philosopher could moralise upon.

‘There is a walk, for instance, in Magdalen with Mrs. Lewis, talking upon the fundamental truths of ethics, and the way of adjusting the scientific instinct to sentiments sacred. There is a midnight smoking dialogue with George Howard about Art and Italy. There is a great recital given by Rubinstein. There are two performances of “Tannhäuser.” There is the “Hamlet” of Salvini. There are innumerable pictures seen and studied. There are sights and scenes of London streets, each one of which would make a poem. There is the entering into the sanctuary of Blake, filled with all he wrought. There is the summer beauty of Cambridge, more picturesque than anything these eyes have seen in England. There is the dreary fading off into illimitable distance of the thoughts I cherished for my book—the passing away to ghost-land of my best imaginings. There is the final sense of impotence to be effectual, most poignant, most crushing, most persuasive, and yet unutterable.’



The <sup>1</sup> summer was spent in hard work upon the third volume of the 'Renaissance,' and at the end of it I went with H. F. Brown and J. E. Pearson to the Valais. Here I found that my physical vigour was considerably abated. I took severe colds, which left me exhausted, and I remember suffering considerable fatigue after a walk with Brown from Saas over the flanks of the Fletschhorn and the Simli Col to the Simplon Hospice. [From the Simplon Hospice we went to the Riederalp, where we found Mr. and Mrs. Dakyns and Mr. Oscar Browning. There, in the midst of damp fogs that crept into our rooms through chinks in the log-built walls, the 'Renaissance' advanced rapidly, at feverish speed, which told of diminishing energy.] My <sup>2</sup> father's dying prediction had been fulfilled. The tax upon my nervous strength during four years of intense and feverish industry exhausted my constitution.

In February 1877, I think, I gave three lectures on 1877 'Florence and the Medici,' at the Royal Institution. Very dull lectures they were, for my soul was not in them. I had composed the lectures especially for what I most abhor, an audience of cultivated people. This is a paradoxical confession. I am nothing if not cultivated; or, at least, the world only expects culture from me. But in my heart of hearts I do not believe in culture, except as an adjunct to life. 'Life is more than literature,' I say. So I cannot, although I devote my time and energy to culture (even as a carpenter makes doors, or a carver carves edelweiss on walnut wood), regard it otherwise than in the light of pastime, decoration, service. Passion, nerve and sinew, eating and drinking, even money-getting, the coarsest forms of activity—come, in my reckoning, before culture. Little did I care what the gentlemen in frock-coats, and the ladies in bonnets, thought of my lectures. I did not care what they thought, because I knew that the real arena for myself and the rest of them was not in that theatre of disputations, elucidations, and plausible explications of all sorts of theories. It lay outside, inside, in a world of things which each carries about with him, and into which each pene-

<sup>1</sup> Autobiography.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

trates when the voice of the lecturer is no more heard in the theatre.

The theatre of the Royal Institution—that dismal pit in which a lecturer stands, under malign London light in February, with a cold draught pumped upon his shoulders—took its revenge upon me for the insolence I have declared, and my indifference to culture. In short, I caught a bad cold in the lungs, while engaged in that husky task of lecturing to drowsy folk, on topics which they neither understood nor cared to be instructed in.

This cold developed into a sharp attack of bronchitis when I returned to Clifton. I had a long and tedious illness. My good friend and doctor, John Beddoe, pronounced that the left lung was now at last seriously and dangerously compromised. He sent me off to Greece. I was to go there in the company of F. Tuckett of the Alpine Club. But I only got as far as Cannes upon the way. A certain *daimôn*—or instinct of abstinence—which attends all open-minded human beings when they have a choice between the possible and the impossible in practical circumstances—told me that I was unfit to risk a journey into Greece, and that it would be inflicting a too serious responsibility upon my travelling friends if I should do so; and, without exactly knowing why, I determined to await a coming crisis in regions which were better known to me.

So I pottered about Lombardy in the spring of 1877. Chronic fever was upon me, and I had the recklessness of disease—the curious fretful energy of some one tormented by a persistent drain on his vitality. I trailed the skirts of my physical and nervous unrest through those Italian cities, always alive to their monuments of art and history, always touching human nature, and in no wise gaining satisfaction, and what the soul gained or lost in the process of experience was a levelling down until it touched the ground-pan of *pauvre humanité*. What I discovered was that I could love and fraternise with the least, and last, and poorest, that I could call the meanest my friends, my brothers and sisters. But I had no gospel to preach to them. I only came to understand them and their integrity with myself.

On this tour I discovered Campanella's sonnets, and began to translate them, together with Michael Angelo's, into English. Terribly ill at last, I managed to reach Clifton early in June without a collapse. During a night spent in great misery at Turin, I was probably on the verge of calamity. Fortunately I reached home; and the next day, while riding on the downs, I was surprised by a sudden and violent hemorrhage from the lungs.

## CHAPTER XII

## MANHOOD—RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT

Recovers slowly—Happiness—His statement of his religion—Childhood—Harrow—Oxford—‘Essays and Reviews’—Comtism—The cosmic enthusiasm—Goethe—Cleanthes—Walt Whitman—Darwin—Conclusion.

1877

A <sup>1</sup> GREAT peace came over me, as I lay for weeks in bed, forgetful of the conflict, slowly and painfully recovering a dram of strength. It was a blissful interlude in my life, those weeks in which I lay resigned to death. But life returned; and though I was maimed and bruised, definitely convicted of actual phthisis, I felt the call to live. When I got up at last from my sick bed, I could hardly recognise myself as the same person. The struggle for mere life had now absorbed and superseded the struggle for what I sought in life. I seemed for the moment like a man new born. I was a child in the hands of something divine, to which I responded with an infinite gratitude. So preoccupied was I with the difficulty of existing that I did not then think what further existence would imply—the resumption of the burden of my personality. I employed myself to the best of my ability in setting my worldly affairs in order—being conscious of impending death—and for the rest I exercised my literary faculty in such light work as I could do—translating the sonnets of Michael Angelo Buonarroti and Tommaso Campanella, which I had begun before my illness. Never have I felt happier in the soul than during those weeks when my life was hanging on a thread, and when the sensuous faculties remained in abeyance—the real man, the self, which

<sup>1</sup> Autobiography.

is immortal, being left open to only intellectual influences, and these pervading only a small portion of his total sensibility.

Religion is so important a factor in man's intellectual life, and has so direct a bearing upon the growth of the emotions, that I ought not to omit some account of my development.

I have already observed that I was not gifted by nature with any strong sense of God as a Person near to me, nor was I naturally of a pious disposition; nor yet, again, endowed with that theological bias which qualifies the metaphysical thought of philosophers like my late brother-in-law, Professor T. H. Green.

The groundwork of my mental temperament might rather be described as literary, æsthetical, with a certain bias to scholarship and curiosity.

In boyhood I received the usual kind of training in religious matters at home. I learned the Catechism, the Collects of the Prayer-Book, and considerable portions of the Psalms and Gospels. My aunt, Miss Sykes, used to read the Bible with us every morning; and on Sundays we always went twice to church. There was nothing in my early surroundings to evoke the religious sentiment by any appeal to my peculiar nature. And yet I believe that I went to Harrow with as strong a sense of moral allegiance to the Deity, as God-fearing and as willing to receive religious influences, as most boys of my age.

My father's mental and moral influence began to make itself powerfully felt during my Oxford life. We were drawn together, and exchanged thoughts upon the deepest problems, with a freedom unusual, perhaps, in the intercourse of father and son. Some of his most intimate friends had been, and others still were, thinkers of the Broad Church school—John Sterling, Rev. Frederic Myers of Keswick, F. D. Maurice, Francis Newman, and Professor Jowett. Their ideas filtered through my father's conversation into my head, together with the criticism of his own clear logic. The conversation of the three last whom I have mentioned, and also of that subtle thinker, Sydney Dobell, familiarised me with lines of speculation antagonistic to any narrow interpretations of Christian dogma. The creeds which cling so firmly to many minds hung

loose on me. As they dropped off and melted away, I felt the difficulty and the danger of living in the world without a fixed belief in God, Christ, the scheme of redemption, the immortality of souls assigned to reward or punishment. I sympathised much with Arthur Clough. But I soon perceived that it would be impossible for me to rest in that halting-place which men like my father, Maurice, Jowett, Stanley, had constructed for themselves and fitted up according to the particular tone and bias of their several dispositions. I understood and respected their position, especially my father's. Still I felt that their qualified adherence to Christianity and the Scriptures had something illogical in it, which might be explained, and excused by the circumstances of their emergence out of rigid orthodoxy into liberalism. I was starting from the point which they had reached, and I should be compelled to go further.

This does not mean that I became irreligious. On the contrary, I now for the first time began to comprehend what religion is, and to feel about for some faith whereby my own soul might be supported. I took to examining my thoughts and wishes with regard to the mysteries of the universe—God, nature, man. This I did seriously, almost systematically, during more than two years of reading for the final schools at Oxford. The studies on which I was engaged—Plato, Aristotle, the history of ancient and modern philosophy, logic—supplied me with continual food for meditation; and in the course of long walks, or midnight colloquies, I compared my own eager questionings with those of many sorts of men—Conington, who professed himself a submissive Christian through terror; Hugh Pearson, one of the mellowest of the orthodox Broad Church men [‘a good man,’ Symonds calls him elsewhere, ‘rooted in a fair soil, over whom chance and change have only an external empire’]; T. H. Green, the sturdy and yet imaginative philosopher; C. C. Puller, already fascinated by the gospel of Auguste Comte; W. R. W. Stephens; A. O. Rutson, George Bright, J. S. Phillpotts, Albert Dicey, Charles Parker, James Bryce, Edwin Palmer. A book called ‘Essays and Reviews’ attracted extraordinary attention at that time; and a vehement contest about the endowment of Professor



Jowett's chair was raging between the Liberals and Conservatives of the University. Theology penetrated our intellectual and social atmosphere. We talked theology at breakfast-parties and at wine-parties, out riding and walking, in college gardens, on the river, wherever young men and their elders met together.

[I have taken the following letter to his friend, Mr. Stephens—one of the longest, fullest, most concentratedly passionate letters he ever wrote—out of its chronological order, and inserted it here because its contents are particularly germane to the subject of this chapter. The letter itself belongs to a period posterior to the preceding passage of the Autobiography, to that most important passage in his life, the speculative crisis at Cannes : ]

‘I<sup>1</sup> want to answer the more serious part of your letter, and to thank you for it. When I wrote to you from Bayeux, in great weariness and sickness of soul, I knew that I was speaking to one who would understand. I felt certain that your point of view would be such as you describe, and such as I believe you rightly call a healthy one. But I would make one remark upon the word health. I believe that health of soul results from possessing a creed : I do not, however, think that because, under peculiar circumstances, a man is denuded of the ordinary creeds, it is a sign of his being unhealthy. His negative condition by isolating him from men around him, and by withdrawing from him the ordinary supports of life and springs of action, is liable to render him restless, feeble, melancholy, and ill. But this is very different from saying that scepticism is a disease of which a man should wish to be cured at all hazards. I premise so much, because I notice that those who have a faith always treat those who do not share it as morbid ; whereas sceptics are just as much justified in retorting that it is a disease to believe what is unwarrantable. In fact, I see the essence of belief in a poor fetish-worshipper, and the essence of scepticism in a man, say, like De Musset ; the one appears to me to have a morbidly redundant, the other

<sup>1</sup> To W. R. W. Stephens. Hastings, June 16, 1867.

a morbidly deficient, secretion of what we call faith. To find the just medium, to have a reasonable faith, is the great point. That is health perhaps; but whether it can be obtained, this *εὐδαιμονία* of the soul, and what it is exactly, appears to me as yet unknown. Moreover, I do not believe that a religious, or rather a theological, belief is necessary for the health. Those who are animated with political or philanthropic creeds, like the Comtists, have quite enough to keep them in proper tone. Even an æsthetical faith, if very vigorous, might suffice. But underlying all these secondary forms of soul-supporting belief, I suspect there lurks the architectonic creed, which gives some reason for the existence of the universe and of man's place upon it. Comte truly is willing to leave this problem alone and devote himself to mankind; but humanity with him becomes a deity, and all he does is to return to the [pre-]Copernican system of anthropology, making his universe for all human purposes revolve round the men upon this planet. Jowett, as you say, believes very firmly in an ordering God, a moral, personal, law-giving God. He does so because he cannot help it, because it has been too deeply stereotyped in his nature to be effaced, because, when questioning and parting with all else, he has never stirred this, because, perhaps, he belongs to the generation of Newman and not to its successor, because he is an ordained priest, because, again I say, he cannot help it.

'This established, you might say: why do you not believe at least so much, and find the peace and power of Jowett? There we come to the disquietude of my soul. I will try to give a few reasons:—

'1. I have not the sentiment of belief; that original, strong, unreasoned sentiment, by virtue of which Jowett cannot help it.

'2. I do not acknowledge any principles, teleological or otherwise, from which a God, in the old true personal creative royal sense, can at present be proved.

'3. I find in my nature certain debilities which render me incapable of ascending to ideals, and seizing them. I seem to myself immersed in facts, incomprehensible facts.

‘ Each of these points requires some explanation, and may as well be taken separately. As for the first, I speak here of having lost the sentiment of belief in a providential, paternal, ruling, judging God. I can perfectly remember the various steps by which I have reached this state. The process began while I was at school, by a refusal to accept the dogmas of original sin and eternal damnation. It advanced steadily with the growth of my mind; for I carried out to its logical conclusion the principle that I might test opinions or creeds, and pronounce whether they were of human origin or not. One after the other fell the constituent beliefs of Christianity, and at last, when I considered the history of all religions, and applied the canons of cold analysis to the central creed of all, I was forced to acknowledge that the personal Deity might, after all, be nothing but a mirage—a magnificent image of humanity—or, as I expressed it, a Brocken spectre, projected by the human consciousness upon the mists of the unknown. The more I dwelt upon this thought, the more weight it acquired in my mind. I perceived that the deities of all races have been the ideal or universal of the people who worshipped them. The Greek Olympus contains the attributes of the Greek race: each family of that race selects a special member of that Olympus. And when Genesis says that God created man in His image, I could not understand why the converse might not be the more scientifically true. Certainly Jehovah “blowing the pestilence before Him from the wilderness of Paran”; Jehovah guiding His people in the wilderness like sheep, appeared to me the type and ideal of the virtues and faults of the Hebrew race. Then came the miracle of the character of Christ and its ascendancy over the modern world. But side by side with this miracle I had to place that of Buddha, that of Islam. That the master races of the world, the modern Europeans, should have embraced and evolved the purest and highest religion, appeared to me natural. My metaphor of the Brocken spectre covered this fact; for a giant creates a more splendid phantom than a dwarf. But having reached this point hastily, eagerly, and full of zeal, I found that I was face to face with death and weakness. I

had destroyed the hypothesis of the paternal God, and had found nothing to substitute for it. The burden of proof was now thrown on me. I had to seek some formula which should satisfy me about myself, the universe, the future. How have these things come about? what do they mean? Science spoke to me of innumerable myriads of years through which this little globe of ours had gradually hardened to its present state; of countless generations of various life destroyed upon its surface, and of the duration of the human family as a "mere scape in oblivion." Moreover, it told of infinite globes and constellations, and of a universe so vast as to crush all contemplation. Everywhere science found law, but it discovered no Lawgiver, and seemed inclined to think that the craving for a Lawgiver was but a temporary and human weakness, an idol of the cave [? tribe].

'Filled with these conceptions, I returned to Christianity and found that, with the exception of its eternal morality, it was adapted to the Ptolemaic and even a ruder system of science. It imagined our globe central, created as the great object of God's designs, attended by the sun and moon and stars as servants, fashioned at a stroke to be the dwelling-place of man. It thought of Heaven as just above our heads, a locality in which God and saints and angels sat enthroned. It imagined Christ ascending through clouds to this place. When I carried that dogma of the Ascension, on which the peculiarly Christian idea of a corporeal immortality rests, to science, science derided it. "For," she aptly said, "in infinite space there is no height nor depth; a body carried upwards through the clouds beyond the force of gravitation, if that were possible, is simply lost. Do you not perceive that the Ascension was a beautiful myth, adapted to the simple conception of the universe as it existed in those unscientific days, the whole value of which is now historical, and which must be placed with the other instructive and exquisite religions of the world?" This reasoning I could not answer; in fact, it seems to me unanswerable. And with the Ascension, which is the master-miracle of Christianity, the minor miracles had to give way. Christianity took its place among the religions

of the world, and told me far more about the human than the divine nature. Still science, though it attacked Christianity in the vital point of the Ascension, could give no satisfactory account of the world. It could not tell me how it had all come about. Comte advised me to not meddle about this—to sit down contentedly, denying the immortality of the soul, doing without God, and confining my energies to philanthropy. But I could not do this. In spite of myself the infinite tormented me; in spite of myself I kept looking skyward, sighing for illumination. I could not forego my hopes of future life, nor take interest in the creatures of a day around me. If we were all, indeed, without a God, without a future, let us die, I murmured; cry not peace where there is no peace; end the miserable farce of human life, and go down with the saurians and mastodons—more perishable than they, because of frailer bones—to corruption. But in the very act of thus murmuring, the centuries arose before me; I saw the processions of the races over the whole globe. I saw their temples and great works; I heard their poems and prayers; I felt within myself immortal thoughts; and the miracle of what we call the mind became pre-eminent. I know we are not in the scale of saurians and mastodons. We cannot perish like them. This world of ours, this wonderful microcosm of our bodies and brains, cannot have come together by chance. The soul of man, be it what it may be, demands more—it requires a God. Then with my cries I beat against the blue heavens. On the tops of mountains, among the Alps, feeling myself alone and near to God, I have sent the passion of my spirit upward. But not an echo answers me. I see nothing but the facts of the miraculous universe, my brain and yours being perhaps its chief miracle. Hitherto I have described the course of scepticism gradually growing in my own mind. I have tried to show how the sentiment of God disappeared from me without the need of God being destroyed. But this is not a merely personal history, it is the history of the age in which we live, of the age of the disintegration of old beliefs. A man like myself can only lose his religious sentiment because the religious sentiment is weak in the men around him. We are



undergoing the greatest cataclysm of thought that the world has ever suffered, and in the midst of it some must perish. Like Balaam, there are many who must prophesy of a star they will not see. In this age it is almost the greatest faith to have no faith, for the old faiths are passing away and the new one has not come, and the men of this generation are like travellers before daybreak, the majority asleep, the few awake and watching anxiously in darkness. Of this I am convinced. The cataclysm began with the Reformation. That was the first and most powerful introduction of a scepticism which since has never ceased to work, successively undermining in the world at large, as I described its operation in my own mind, all creeds from the most insignificant to the most vital. Science has helped ; physical science, by showing that the old miracles are untenable ; the science of histories and languages by comparing religions, and putting them upon one footing. The most powerful acids of every sort have simultaneously been applied to the fabric of catholic belief, which is honeycombed through and through, the only portion which resists all chemistry being the noble life and helpful morality of Christ. That, which is the most human part at the same time, still subsists. But the metaphysics of belief, all the definition of the Deity, the Hellenistic conception of the Trinity, the Hebrew conception of Christ's atoning sacrifice, the Oriental doctrine of incarnation, the Roman element of inexorable legality have been purged out. Even the belief in the immortality of the soul—a belief from which the millions of Buddhism shrink with horror—rests vaguely upon the arbitrary basis of the intense egotism and personality of the modern European races.

‘I have only sketched in outline a very few of the causes which have contributed to enfeeble the religious sentiment. Passing to the second point, it is clear that if the sentiment has been destroyed, no arguments can prevail. The teleological, I confess, is powerful. To lay the universe on chance like Democritus at once appears to us impossible. We instinctively look out for a Creator ; but whether this Creator is, like ourselves, a moral and intellectual being, cannot be proved. It is sentiment which convinces those which believe Him to be so.



For a horse would think Him like a horse, a stone like a stone. Perhaps He is everything—the Pantheistic scheme. This, however, does not satisfy a true sceptic. It requires just as much sentiment to be contented with an “*anima mundi*” as with a providential governor. I am so profoundly sceptical that I cannot accept any hypothesis. Again the argument *quod semper et ubique* seems to me to prove nothing. The fact that all men have placed their creeds upon the notion of a Deity may simply mean that this notion is an idol of the cave [? tribe].

‘As to the third point, I feel sure that the habitual condition of scepticism enfeebles and debases the mind, so that a long continuance in it renders the spiritual sight more and more confused. It used to be urged against scepticism, that it made men immoral; but that scepticism must have been of a very coarse and insincere kind; such scepticism resembles playing the truant from God, not an earnest search for truth in painful God-forgotten wildernesses. But I feel that the most genuine and noble form of scepticism, by withdrawing the support of the paternal God, by obscuring the future after this life ends, by denuding the soul of moral ideas and fixed principles, renders a man more lax in his ethical conceptions, more socially indolent, less capable of energetic efforts, less angry against evil, less enthusiastic for good. He is always saying like Montaigne: ‘*Ni comme ceci, ni comme cela, ni même autrement*’; or again, ‘*Peut-être oui, peut-être non, peut-être ni l’un ni l’autre.*’ Such scepticism is like a blighting wind: nothing thrives beneath it. How can a man who has not made up his mind about the world and immortality, who seeks and cannot find God, care for politics, for instance? He is thrown back on merely personal and selfish tastes or interests. He is aimless in life. He has no *point d’appui*, no root, but sprawls, lying like an uprooted plant which belongs to nothing, can attach itself to nothing, and gapes for any chance drop of rain to moisten its fast withering suckers. The longer this scepticism continues, the deeper becomes the unrest, the more worthless appear common sources of interest, the more vacant seems the soul. I speak of those at least who are too noble to

eat and drink and die, or who without being noble at all, cannot eat and drink, because of the awfulness of vacancy around them.

Je souffre, il est trop tard, le monde s'est fait vieux ;  
Une immense espérance a traversé la terre.  
Malgré nous vers le ciel il faut lever les yeux.

‘That is the note of anxious, yearning, impotent, God-desiring, hungry and thirsty, exiled, footsore, feverish, blind, passionate, unhappy scepticism in the present day. Give a man possessed by this fiend one creed, throw him a mustard seed of faith, and he will move mountains. It does not much matter what a man believes ; but for power and happiness he must believe something—he must have his foot “tenoned and morticed” somewhere, not planted for ever on a shifting sand-heap. Yet from the very abyss of such scepticism I find wings and mount upwards. The chalice of this martyrdom of the century is vouchsafed me—and shall I not drink it? If I suffer and am weak, have I not also clairvoyance? Can I not see how others deceive themselves and anticipate, with Pisgah raptures, the promise of a better country? For myself nothing—for the men around me nothing—but the heavens are yet telling the glory of God, and the hills are yet crying one to the other with loud voices. I cannot understand their tale or their loud voices. But it is enough for me that they are surely somewhere understood. I would rather die from inanition, which seems probable, than be fed on husks and adulterations and the ground bones of antiquated mummies. If you see the next “Cornhill,” you will observe the bearing of what I say about the Alps there on this point. I fear this letter will have wearied you. Yours touched me with its profession of faith, sublimely simple and sufficing. I could not but reveal to you the troubled waters of my own soul. Perhaps very long and painful watching may end in illumination. Some co-ordinating principle may harmonise my discords, and bring cosmos out of chaos ere I die. If so, what triumphs! Oh, superb! I see what is coming. I hear the chorus of the symphony. Perhaps not. These jangled and wailing minors may sing me to the

grave. But, in either case, "Thy will, not mine, be done." Good-bye.'

[From a slightly different, a more contemplative, less emotional point of view, Symonds deals with the same subject in this letter to Mr. Sidgwick:]

'I<sup>1</sup> wonder what I have done to deserve being classed among the infidels, who imagine human delusion to be the origin of all religions. I am far too sceptical for that. The explanation of Comte seems to me more puerile and less consonant with the laws of our nature than Theism. But yet I am not a Theist. I should like to know very much what made you one, or whether you never ceased to be one. I would give a great deal to regain the Christian point of view, or rather, since all modern people are ethically Christian, to regain the sentiment of belief in the Deity—the personal, creative, conscious Deity. But I nowhere find Him. I see that this age has no definition of Him. I cannot construct one. Theists, each and all in different ways, continue the old anthropomorphism and self-worship. They derive the Deity from man, refining their conceptions proportionately to the advancing refinement of the world. It is possible that this may be good evidence of the Deity: an innate impulse to worship God in our own image may have been implanted in us by Him. But scepticism requires evidence from the other side. In a word, nothing appears to me satisfactory by way of proof but revelation; and I do not feel myself forced at present to credit any revelation. All the revelations, like the Theistic ideals, seem products of the human soil; good, bad, or indifferent, according as clay, sand, peat, and the like are mixed. I wonder whether you think you may lay your finger in spiritualism on some point affecting revelation. If you do, you have the secret. I could believe anything if somebody first knocked me flat with a club—if all the conceit were taken out of me by the proof of agencies beyond our experience revealing God, I could prepare myself for mysticism. Here says the

<sup>1</sup> To Henry Sidgwick. Hastings, June 23, 1867.

teleologist, are not thought, conception of seed, the growth of plants, miracles enough for you? Undoubtedly they are miracles. But, in order to make me a Theist, connect them with God, prove their inevitable emanation from Paternal Intelligence—I am not Atheistic, or scoffing; I am merely helpless, painfully surrounded by miracles. My pen upon this paper, these letters, and what they mean, assuredly these things are miracles; it is this very thing that distracts me; miracles are so plentiful. I turn aside and think of the past myriads of centuries; I look across the stars and see billions flying into sight suddenly down the tubes of the telescopes; are there not more miracles than blackberries? But not one teaches me God. Or if I talk of God, worn out with these inexplicable wonders, I feel this to be cowardice; God, so spoken of, is a merely otiose *sumмум genus*, a general term to include everything, the O which ends an infinite series. In other words, again, if God is everywhere He is as good as nowhere. I have forgotten His definition. The world cannot supply me with one. I sprawl simply. Then what makes you a Theist? Is it the moral world? Is it your intellect? In the moral and intellectual miracles I do not find more than in those of the material world, except that, because my whole being depends on them essentially, they seem to me more marvellous and more inexplicable. Yet when I try to abstract them, and when I throw myself into a state of trance, proceeding in my ascent from *infimæ species* to the *sumмум genus*, I eventually eliminate everything but naked consciousness, which tells absolutely no tale. It is an appalling solitude. My head reels, my heart seems ceasing, I catch myself upon the verge of madness, and roll down the mountain of meditation again, only too glad to be among the *infimæ species* at the bottom. Long ago, even as a child, I had the morbid faculty of such self-abstraction, and when doubt first insinuated itself into my mind this spiritual nakedness made itself horribly remembered. I thought, will death be like that, and when our eyes are closed for ever, will even that last sense of existence, naked, solitary, formless, unimpressed, which I so much hate, be also lost? I can imagine annihilation thus. What I call my soul is simply

the embroidery of sense upon this blankness. I can reduce it to its primal blankness by abstracting sense; and when sense is finally abstracted from me, what, to call "Myself," will be left? With the conception of the soul disappears that of God. Then both irresistibly rush back and assert themselves. Then comes the problem of human history. The philosophy of religion says its say. Physical science perplexes more than it illuminates. Its new horizons are merely great in bewilderment. The struggle of the soul begins to wax faint. It ceases and atomic scepticism gets in. Therewith there is nothing left to live for. Every faculty droops; the whole man becomes etiolated; death intervenes, and at last—the great secret.

'But such a helpless condition is awful—*ἀθεὸς ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ*. Four words rarely meant more than these. Objectively they contradict themselves, for "*quis Deus incertum est, habitat Deus*"; subjectively, in relation to the aching brain and unsatisfied heart, and incomplete intelligence and weak moral nature, they contain a volume of sad significance. "*Malgré moi l'infini me tourmente.*" The whole question revolves on the *quis, quis Deus*. If there be no other God, what Is is a God—not Jah, but *ὅν*—yet who, having heard of Moses and of Christ, can be satisfied with Parmenides? Even Spinoza will not do for me. I would sooner have Comte than the worshippers of *Ens*. My human weakness clamours for a personal God, and—let not Congreve hear me—for some assurance of either immortality or annihilation. It is the indefinite which is so cruel, the perpetual "perhaps," which will not be dismissed.

'The only thing I know which will restore my physical tone and give me health is living in the Alps. The only prospect of obtaining spiritual tone and health seems to be the discovery of some immaterial altitudes, some mountains and temples of God. As I am prostrated and rendered vacant by scepticism, the Alps are my religion. I can rest there and feel, if not God, at least greatness—greatness prior, and posterior to man in time, beyond his thoughts, not of his creation, independent, palpable, immovable, proved. The sense of the



Alps was a long time coming to me. Perhaps even now that grander sentiment is on its way.'

The lines<sup>1</sup> of speculation which I followed led me to believe that some radical change in the current conceptions of the Divine Being was necessitated by the changes taking place in modern thought; and that this would eventually substitute the ideal of a God immanent in the universe for the ideal of a God external to it, creative of the world's machinery and providentially controlling it. Goethe's Proëmium to the poem called 'Gott und Welt,' supplied me with a formula adapted to my own emotional and rational forecast of this new phase, on which I thought theology must enter.

During my readings in the Greek philosophers, I came upon the hymn of Cleanthes.

This suggested the moral attitude of willing submission to universal law, which will have to supply a groundwork for the conduct of the individual under the conditions of the new faith I had conceived. The study of Marcus Aurelius now absorbed me. Eagerly and spontaneously, I grew to be penetrated with what has since been called 'The Cosmic Enthusiasm.'

While this religion, composed of scientific pantheism and of stoical morality, was forming in my mind, I read Seeley's 'Ecce Homo.' The enthusiasm of humanity expressed in that essay took no hold upon me; just as Comte's worship of the '*Etre Suprême*' (so eloquently advocated by Richard Congreve in my frequent walks with him about the Roman hills) had been rejected, and as Renan's seductive portrait of 'Le doux Galiléen' was somewhat contemptuously laid aside. They struck me as ineffective attempts, each in its own way and on its own line, to save something valuable from the mass which had to be rejected. The first was a survival of evangelical piety transmuted into philanthropy; the second a survival of Catholicism in curious conjunction with scientific agnosticism; the third a survival of the old religious sentiment, denuded of dogma, replaced by means of scholarship and romantic emotion upon a treacherous ground of poetical sympathy. The

<sup>1</sup> Autobiography.



respectability of such efforts to modulate from the old to the new, and of many other efforts made by many eminent persons, I could not and did not wish to deny. But I felt that I should not be saved by any of these palliatives. My soul needed something more sincere than the first and third of those I have named, something less pretentious and grotesque than the second. It was surely better to abide upon the rock of expectation I had found myself: however stern, arid, unhomely, the landscape might appear: however dolefully the waves and winds of the eternal storm raged round it. I therefore stuck to the determination of singing my hymn of praise in Goethe's Proëmium, of breathing my prayers at night in the verses of Cleanthes. The religion of the Cosmic enthusiasm appeared to me the only creed compatible with agnosticism forced upon a candid mind.

Nothing but the bare thought of a God-penetrated universe, and of myself as an essential part of it, together with all things that appear in their succession—ether and inorganic matter passing into plants, and creatures of the sea and beasts rising to men and women like myself, and onward from us progressing to the stage of life unrealised by human reason—nothing but the naked, yet inebriating vision of such a cosmos satisfied me as a possible object of worship. When this thought flooded me, and filled the inmost fibres of my sentient being, I discovered that I was almost at rest about birth and death, and moral duties, and the problem of immortality. These were the world's affairs, not mine. Having lost the consolations of faith in redemption through Christ, and all that pertains thereto, I had gained in exchange this, that I could

lay myself upon the knees  
Of Doom, and take mine everlasting ease.

So far I had travelled on the path of self-construction, when I came across the writings of Walt Whitman. I find it difficult to speak about 'Leaves of Grass' without exaggeration. Whitman's intense emotional feeling for the universe, his acute sense of the goodness of life in all its aspects, the

audacity of his mood—as of one eager to cast himself upon illimitable billows, assured that whether he sank there or swam it would be well with him, confident the while that sink he could not, that nothing can eventually come to naught. This concrete passionate faith in the world, combined with the man's multiform experience, his human sympathy, his thrill of love and comradeship, sent a current of vitalising magnetism through my speculations. The formulas of Goethe and Cleanthes fell into their proper place. The stoical philosophy, like Aaron's dry rod, put forth blossoms. The rock of expectation I had found, and where I meant to stay, began to sprout with herbage, rustle with forests, echo to the notes of singing-birds, and gush with living fountains. The waves and winds of the eternal storm around it changed their message. If they spoke not to my soul of peace, they roused me to the sense of 'liberty, immensity, action.' In short, Whitman added conviction, courage, self-reliance to my sense of the Cosmic enthusiasm. What is more, he taught me, as no enthusiasm of humanity could do, the value of fraternising with my fellows—for their own sakes, to love them, to learn from them, to teach them, to help and to be helped by them—not for any ulterior object upon either side. I felt, through him, what it really is to be a member of the universe I sought to worship.

About this time I began to study Darwin's theory of zoological development, and absorbed, so far as suited me, from him and Herbert Spencer, the philosophy of evolution. With the metaphysical idea of that philosophy I was sufficiently acquainted through my readings in the works of the Greek sages, Bruno, Spinoza, Goethe, lastly Hegel. But I perceived at once how the latest aspect of the theory and the partial proof of it squared with my religion and gave it substance. I derived, as I suppose all men must do, only so much from these teachers as might feed a self-forged faith.

So then, having rejected dogmatic Christianity in all its forms, Broad Church Anglicanism, the gospel of Comte, Hegel's superb identification of human thought with essential Being, and many minor nostrums offered in our times to

sickening faith—because none of these, forsooth, were adapted to my nature—I came to fraternise with Goethe, Cleanthes, Whitman, Bruno, Darwin, finding that in their society I could spin my own cocoon with more of congruence to my particular temperament than I discerned in other believers, misbelievers, non-believers, passionate believers, of the ancient and the modern schools.

Speaking simply, I chose for my motto ‘To live resolvedly in the Whole, the Good, the Beautiful.’ I sought out friends from divers centuries, who seemed to have arrived, through their life-throes and ardent speculations, at something like the same intuition into the sempiternally inscrutable as I had. They helped me by their richer or riper experience, by flights beyond my reach, by knowledge denied to my poor studies, by audacities which thrilled the man in me. I addicted myself to their society because they accepted the whole, and were not trafficking or pettifogging about a portion. They threw themselves upon the world and God with simple self-devotion, seeking nothing extraordinary in this life or the next, accepting things as they beheld them, attempting to mould no institutions, leaving the truths they had discovered to work like leaven, aiming at justice and a perfect clarity of vision, discarding economies and accommodations of all kinds, casting the burden of results upon *that* or *him* who called them into being, standing unterrified, at ease, before time, space, circumstance, and any number of sidereal systems.

Because these men were so, I elected them as the friends with whom my spirit chose to fraternise. From being in their company I derived solace, and their wisdom, like in kind, was larger than my own. It is good for the soul to dwell with such superiors; just as it is also good, in daily life, to live with so-called inferiors, to learn from them, and love them.

I do not seek to preach this faith which animates me. As a necessary part of my autobiography, I have described how I came to form a certain religious creed. No one more than myself is capable of criticising its inadequacy to satisfy other minds. Certainly no one but myself knows how tentative and far from stable it is, how like a gaseous fluid in the mind of

him who lives by it. Still, being what it is, this faith has enabled me to do my duty, in so far as I have done it by my family and friends; it has brought forth my literary work, and has sustained me active under the pressure of many grievous and depressing maladies. Through it, I think, with God's blessing, I have been enabled to pull through consumption preying on my vitals during the last quarter of a century. It penetrates almost everything I have sent to press under my own name. It will be found notably in the last essays of my 'Studies of Greek Poets,' in the last two volumes of my 'Renaissance in Italy,' in the epilogue to 'Palumba,' in the last sections of 'Animi Figura,' in the whole of my latest work, 'Essays Speculative and Suggestive.' The perorations of all that I have written are inspired by this faith, as the substance of all my labour was for me made vital by it.

How frail and insecure is any faith. I might adapt a memorable sentence of Walt Whitman, and exclaim, 'Belief is to the believer, and comes back most to him.' We know that the solidest stronghold of faith, dogmatically built up, morticed on granite, mortared into battlements, garrisoned by multitudes of men militant, will crumble with the lapse of ages. The form passes away; and only the enduring relations which it represented, partial adequacies to the wants and truths of human nature, partial adequacies to the facts of the universe, remain. These survive, accumulate, and are continually being worked into the form and substance of new creeds. The question for a man who has dared to innovate in any age is, whether his religious instincts are at all concordant with the coming belief. If they should be, he may reckon among pioneers. If they are not, it will not signify for him so long as he has lived by them. God is the only judge, and God 'reveals Himself in many ways'; God is known to us as everlasting variation, albeit 'God is the same, and His years do not change.'

Let, then, the one man who has found his faith speak to the rest of humankind, as a linnet sings to linnets.

The ever-during idea, independent of dogmas, of creeds, of cocoons spun by the individual in order to protect his germ of

spiritual life against the cold—that idea, out of which religions spring, is the same now as when Kant expressed it in his pregnant imaginative phrase: ‘Nothing stirs the sense of awe in me except the stars at night and the soul of man.’ The soul and the universe, their apparent contradiction and their ultimate solidarity—that is the ideal substance out of which all creeds are carved. In both and each of the factors, as these present themselves in apparent duality to us, God remains the only reality, the unifying, constituting life. To transcend, to circumvent, to transact with the law of the world, is impossible. To learn anything final about it is probably denied the human intellect. Yet the very consciousness of these limitations and disabilities forces the soul back upon religion. It does not so much matter which faith a man adopts, or what he fashions for himself, yet hardly can he live to any purpose without faith.

## CHAPTER XIII

## MANHOOD—FROM CLIFTON TO DAVOS

A change necessary—Question of where to go—Consults Sir William Jenner—Ordered to the Nile—Takes Davos Platz on the way, and stays there—Begins to recover—First weeks at Davos—‘Sonnets of Michael Angelo and Campanella’—Spring journeys—Passage of the Fluela—Monte Generoso—‘Many Moods’—Christian Buol—Introduction to the real life of Davos—The tenor of that life—Decision to settle at Davos—Goes home—Ends his residence at Clifton Hill House.

1877 It<sup>1</sup> was impossible to think of remaining in England (after such a serious illness); and the doubt was whither we should wend our way—whether to the Canaries or Australia (for the sake of the sea journey), or to Egypt. I decided against the sea journey after short deliberation. I knew too much about its inconveniences from invalids who were better able to endure them than I was. We determined at last upon a winter in a Dahabieh. We were to take Janet and Madge and Isabella Gamble (now Mrs. Robert Otter) with us, leaving Lotta and Katharine under the charge of their nurse with our relations at Clifton and Oxford. But before we made the move, I went up to London and consulted Sir William Jenner. He told me very gravely that I must not leave England without settling all my affairs, and that, in his opinion, a fresh cold would render my recovery impossible. He also recommended me to spend some weeks upon the way to Egypt in the high Alps, in order, if possible, to gain a little strength. I had every reason to trust in his judgment, for he knew the circumstances of my family.

My youngest sister, Mrs. T. H. Green, and her husband happened at this time to be staying at Davos Platz. They

<sup>1</sup> Autobiography.



wrote a very favourable account of the place—it was the first time I heard of it—the doctors, appliances for illness, air, hotels, and so forth. This induced me to prefer Davos to the Engadine, especially as I should have her company there.

Accordingly I arrived, more dead than alive after the fatigue of the hot journey, at Davos, on August 7, 1877. As the valley opened before me from the height of Wolfgang, veiled in melancholy cloud, toward the close of a weary day, I thought that I had rarely seen a less attractive place to live in. Everything looked so bleak and bare; and though I loved the Alps, I discerned little of their charm in Davos. What should I have thought, had I then been told that twelve years afterwards, on the anniversary of that day, I should be penning these lines in a house built for my habitation here? That I should have spent by far the longer part of those intervening years in ever-growing and abiding love for Davos, in strenuous literary work, and in the enjoyment of a society singularly congenial to my peculiar nature? On this August 7, 1889, while I am writing in the open air, under the shadow of my *Wandelbahn* or ambulatory, I look back with a curious mixed sense of gratitude, surprise, and self-abasement, over those twelve years past. Whatever happens, I shall remember that these years of my chequered and perturbed existence have been the best, the healthiest, and the most active of the whole. I may have to say with Job, ‘Quare de vulva me eduxisti?’ But I shall not say, ‘Quare me ad Davosias duxisti, Domine?’

Dr. Ruedi, when he came to inspect me the morning after my arrival, pronounced it a grave case. He gave me directions which I scrupulously followed. The first three weeks were spent in sitting all day long in the open air upon a gravel terrace in front of the Hotel Belvedere. Then I was allowed to go into the wood. My man-servant took me up in a little carriage, hung a hammock between two pine-trees, carried and placed me in the hammock, and when the sun came near to setting, fetched me again in the carriage.

Whenever I pass the place where they used to sling my hammock a curious sense of reverence comes over me, a feeling of the mystery surrounding human life. Then I seemed so

surely marked out for gradual declension, that my thoughts assumed the grey and quiet tone of resignation. I lay watching the squirrels leap from pine to pine above my head, and the clouds sail through the quiet spaces of the sky—listening to my wife's reading of Boswell's Johnson—noticing the children play, turning now and then a couplet in my translation of Michael Angelo's Sonnets. I was not fit for work. Nature went healthily to sleep in me, and the first sign of convalescence was a slow dim sense of reawakening mental energy, very different from the feverish and fretful activity of the past years. This found its expression one day soon after noon—I remember the hour, the place, the aspect of the sky and valley well—when I felt impelled to write that series of my Sonnets which are called 'Sonnets on the Thought of Death.'

Fortunately we were favoured with a wonderfully fine autumn. About the beginning of September I was permitted to walk a little, and to take drives. Then I began to explore the beauties of Davos; climbing by slow degrees higher and higher up the Schatzalp, which I finally surmounted in November, driving with my wife into Sertig Thal, Dischma Thal, and the Züge. I saw that Davos could be lived in, and felt myself so well here that I resolved to give up Egypt and complete my winter under Dr. Ruedi's care. I wrote on the subject to Sir William Jenner, who replied that he must bid me pause and reflect before I determined 'to give my vile body to the Davos doctors.' Not intimidated by this, because I knew that I was thriving, and greatly dreaded change, I stuck to my plan, put aside our Nile outfit, and sent to England for clothes and furs suited to an Alpine winter.

[The discovery that Davos and the Davos climate suited Symonds's tastes and his health, led eventually to the formation of a permanent home in that high Alpine valley, though he at first entertained hopes of returning to England, and the final abandonment of Clifton Hill House as his residence did not take place till the year 1880. How large a part of his life at Davos was consecrated to study is proved by the long list of books which were written in his Graubünden home.

The essential vigour, the courage, the fibre of his character must be felt by any one who considers for a moment the adverse conditions of health, of absence from libraries, of intellectual solitude under which this vast and varied literature was produced. But the books are there to speak for themselves, and it is not on his literary life in Davos that I wish to dwell. Rather, by the help of letters to his friends, I desire to display the broadening life and nature of the man, ever more embracing, more cosmic, till the perfervid spirit burned the body through; to show how his friendships became closer; how his relations with his contemporaries in English literature were expanded and fostered by a diligent correspondence and occasional meetings; how, with the growth of his reputation, the younger generation of writers was attracted to him, and in what generous and genial measure he responded; how his sympathy with the hardy mountaineers, among whom his lot was cast, struck root and grew profound; how his patience, his forethought, his assistance to these friends spread out in ever widening circles, till now, from end to end of the canton, on Julier, on Albula, and on grim Fluela, in lonely Avers, or by the orchards of Domleschg, the sound of his name will brighten the faces of those to whom it is addressed, and wake no feigned regrets that he is gone.

The process of recovery was slow. There were frequent relapses and long tiresome hours of inactivity; but on the whole, progress was made. 'I attribute my gradual recovery,' he writes, 'in no small measure to the fact that I resolutely refused to give up study. Some hours of every day were devoted to literature; and thus I succeeded in printing and publishing "Sonnets of Michael Angelo and Campanella," and "Many Moods."'

'You ask me how I am,' he writes to Mr. Sidgwick, on Nov. 6, 1877; 'so I answer you thus. Subjectively I am much better, more capable of being amused and taking an interest in things. And with this internal improvement has returned my rapid desire to do something, *i.e.* to feel intensely, and write vigorously; but as yet these motions only end in irritation of the nerves by night and day.

‘You would be surprised if you could have seen us to-day. We drove *en famille* up a valley for two hours in *bergwägel*, among frozen streams and over icy roads, with icicles hanging from the branches, under a sun which, for clearness and strength, surpasses anything I ever felt in England. The snow has not come yet, but when it arrives, we are promised a fortnight in the house, and then a return of this Olympian weather. Who, dearest Henry, is to be happy about the Universe, if you are not? It is a bad business for everybody if you feel as you say you do. I, for my part, try to live without asking many questions. I do not want to be indifferent to the great problems of morals, immortality and the soul; but I want to learn to be as happy as my health and passions will allow me, without raising questions I am convinced no one will ever answer from our human standpoint. You, however, have made it your business to inquire, and it is aggravating to arrive at bewilderment; only I feel you will do the world good service if you stoutly proclaim this bewilderment, and attack the false idols of knowledge. If we cannot build, we can dissipate illusions.’]

‘Your<sup>1</sup> most acceptable letter has just come with laudable speed up to this bare bleak Alpine valley, 5,200 feet above civilisation. Here am I destined to spend the winter in the snow. I started, at Sir William Jenner’s instance, for a dahabieh on the Nile; but on the way I halted here, and I was so dilapidated by the journey, and I found the air so far suit me, that I determined to abide here.

‘You have formed a rather roseate notion of my health.

‘Of course I do not drop my pen. That would be too doleful. So you see me now and then in print. But real “work” I cannot, may not do.

‘I was going to beg for a copy of your poems in return for a little volume of mine (“Sonnets of Michael Angelo and Campanella”), which I hope to print this winter. What Turks and Russians have to do with poems I can’t conceive. But Smith & Elder tell me the war has spoiled the sale of my

<sup>1</sup> To Edmund Gosse. Davos, Nov. 8, 1877.

"Renaissance." So I suppose the reading public keeps its pockets buttoned in a state of uneasy expectation.

'Do send me the "Poliziano." I shall enjoy reading some of his delightful miscellanies here. Thank you infinitely for thinking of me as to him.

'I ought to congratulate you on the new arrival you speak of. It is a queer business extending one's paternity in the domestic circle. Somehow literary men don't get old and solid fast enough. We are *κοῖφα καὶ πτηνά*, as Plato says somewhere.'

'What very<sup>1</sup> nice Christmas news you sent me. I am so exceedingly glad about Tom's election, and I want to hear all about it.

'We had "festivities" last night, a Christmas tree, which amused the children much, and was really very pretty, some glees very nicely sung, two *tableaux vivants*, in one of which the Belgian blonde played Aurora, and a little dancing. I did not see much of the fun, for the room was hot and noisy, and I preferred going to bed. Dr. Ruedi has been going his rounds this morning; for several of his patients are dilapidated by the festivities. We are a strange cranky society, keeping up a show of health and spirits so long as we go to bed at nine, walk like snails, and live soberly. But this sham won't stand so much excitement as there was last night.

'I really don't know how I shall bear it much longer. This vegetative existence stupefies and irritates me at the same time. I am too stupid to attend to anything, and yet too restless to go quietly off into a waking dream. If it ends in keeping life at the expense of this régime, I shall break through and take the consequences.'

'I was<sup>2</sup> really very glad to hear from you from C. H. H., 1878 though it always gives me a twinge to think of our home now. What is to happen about it in the future, I am too cowardly to think. I do not believe I shall ever be able to live there.

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte. Davos, December 25, 1877.

<sup>2</sup> To the same. Davos, January 9, 1878.



But I hope Catherine and the children will before long be all together there again ; and if I keep getting better, I shall, I trust, be at least able to pass some months of the year at home. That is the sort of future I think about.

‘I am amused to hear you still pine for a house on Redclyffe Parade. It is a very lovely spot. My pinings are for a *Bauerhaus* (peasant’s house) here, and I have already selected two or three. I am making friends with a very nice and fine young fellow, Christian Buol, the brother of the innkeeper. I like the people here. Some permanent *pied-à-terre* in the high Alps I shall have to get.’

‘I am <sup>1</sup> going to bother you with two questions. The first I know you can answer straight away. What is the origin of the term “rhyme royal” in English metre? Do you know when it was first applied? In fact, I should like to be told anything you choose to tell me about the stanza.

‘The second question is this, which, please, do not bother about until you may happen to be going on your own account to the Br. Mus. Has any one, German or other, written a monograph on the story of Antinous, and the relics of sculpture that bear his name?

‘It seems rather cool to use friends as living dictionaries of the most encyclopædic information. But what is a poor wretch, incarcerated in this frost-prison for five months, to do when some problem he cannot solve passes across his brain?

‘It is most horrible here now. We have been shut in the house four days and four nights while it snowed incessantly ; and now the average depth of snow is seven feet everywhere—in the drifts and avalanches from ten to thirty feet. As I was looking out of the window yesterday I saw an avalanche fall at a short distance from the house, which swept away a cart with three horses and two carters—buried them all. The men and two horses struggled out ; but one horse was suffocated. The cold at the present moment is 34° Fahr. of frost, *i.e.* 2 below zero. It is sometimes 10 below zero. I think I am the better, however, for the climate.’

<sup>1</sup> To Edmund Gosse. Davos, Hotel Belvedere, January 19, 1878.



‘I<sup>1</sup> must have Keats’s “Love Letters” out; though I confess there is something in the personality of Keats, some sort of semi-physical aroma wafted from it, which I cannot endure; and I fear these letters will be very redolent of this. What a curious thing is that undefinable flavour of personality—suggestion of physical quality, odour of the man in his unconscious and spontaneous self-determination, which attracts or repels so powerfully, and is the very root of love or dislike.’

‘I<sup>2</sup> am meditating sending for a cartload of books in order to go on with the “Renaissance.” If we stay here another year it will be well worth while to get into real work again. I sometimes feel the want of it. In no place where I ever camped out have I felt so much at home, so tranquil in spirits, so sane and so contented, as I do here. It was a blessed wind, I think, which blew us hither.’

[The winter came to an end about April, and, according to Davos custom, those who had spent the winter there were ordered away during the snow-melting. Symonds and his family took the first of those yearly journeys over the high passes which lead towards the south. In the following letter he notes the beneficial results of a winter at Davos :]

‘We<sup>3</sup> left Davos on Thursday—a party of six sledges, four for Catherine and me and the children and Christian Buol and a maid, and two for our luggage, to which was added a seventh for an Italian gentleman and a Mr. Ash, who asked to join us.

‘The avalanches on Wednesday destroyed the road to Wiesen just by the Bärentritt. So at the last minute we had to decide on going over the dreaded Fluela, against which the Buols and Busches and Herr Coester had been advising us most strongly. We had meant to take Julier and Maloja.

‘It was indeed a perilous journey, because of the enormous masses of fresh snow-drifts, and recent avalanches. The wind was dreadful, and we ploughed through a vast wilderness of

<sup>1</sup> To Edmund Gosse. Davos, February 16, 1878.

<sup>2</sup> To the same, February 22, 1878.

<sup>3</sup> To his sister Charlotte. Chiavenna, April 7, 1878.

trackless snow, in some places galloping straight down slopes as steep as a house-roof, then making the horses put their four feet together and slide, then traversing the tops of galleries built to defend the road from avalanches, but now deep buried in them. Some of the snow-mounds we crossed were said to be sixty feet in depth, and the heaps of huge conglobated snow-balls, scattered in every direction by what had fallen from the ledges above us the day before, were horrid to look at. All the way down the conductor would show me the places where friends and acquaintances of his had been killed during the last two years; and all the accidents that had happened in April. However, we got down to Sūs safe; and then for five hours drove up the Engadine in a thick snowstorm to Samaden. On Friday it again snowed densely all over the Maloja, and we found a white Italy, of which we could see hardly anything.

‘It speaks volumes for Davos that these two rough days in open sledges, one of twelve, the next of ten hours, did me no perceptible harm. Of course I was tired, but that was all. Everybody else arrived well and with much exhilaration. The sun came out yesterday, and to-day we have been gathering spring-flowers—snowflakes, cowslips, red heath, pink primulas, violets, hepaticas, forget-me-nots, pansies, polygala. You can fancy how we revel in them.

‘I have found a very good friend and servant in Christian Buol. He is a splendid fellow, and takes great care of me.’

[How keenly Symonds enjoyed the touch of literary appreciation in this enforced exile is made very clear in this letter to Mr. Gosse:]

‘Your<sup>1</sup> words about “Lombard Vignettes” were wafted to me by the breeze of Smith & Elder. It was kind of you to write so. It is just this which does one really good amid much that is both vain and tedious in life; it makes writing worth the while, independent of its own pleasures.

‘I am amazed that sentences, written with a bleeding heart and failing health last year in a diary too often blotted with

<sup>1</sup> To Edmund Gosse. Monte Generoso, June 9, 1878.

tears, and copied last winter in the weariness of Alpine frost for want of better stuff to do, should carry to you so much scent of beauty. I almost believe sometimes that the suffering of great mental pain gives quality to work we do in quite alien regions.

‘I am now four thousand feet above the plain of Lombardy. Milan is shining in sunset on those purple fields, and a hundred cities flash back the last red light. I can see both Alps and Apennines, and all the silvery lake over-canopied and brought into one picture by flame-litten clouds. The bells are rising from villages far below, and a hush of evening silence creeps over all the ridges, cliffs, and forests of this billowy mountain—breaking into wavelike crests and literally toppling in its awful chasms over the blue water of Lugano. The meadows are one drift of white lilies, narcissus and asphodel, wanting only Proserpine or the figure of Dante’s Matilda to make them poems. Indeed they are poems, with that unchanging background of history and romance and art and human life, the plain against whose violet breadth they quiver to the little winds.

‘I hope S. and E. sent you “Many Moods.” If you read it, will you frankly say what you think, sometime? You may see from the dedication that I am not unprepared for plain speech in my own critical mood. I notice that Robert Buchanan, in “Light” for June, thinks a critic ought not to try verse, and that in any case I had made a poor business of it. I believe it is truly so; and I shall be the better for coming to be quite sure of this if it is so. If I live, I may still do something with prose, for thought and feeling deepen through suffering, and the hand does not lose its cunning, obedient to the still aspiring brain.”

[By midsummer Symonds was back again at Davos. That his sceptical attitude in matters intellectual had not altered is clear from the following letter addressed to his brother-in-law, T. H. Green. But the tone of the letter is cooler, less passionate, less personal than that which inspired his earlier formulation of doubt. Symonds is no longer a dweller in the

world of abstractions, but rather a spectator of operations which take place therein:]

‘I have<sup>1</sup> been reading your sermon on Faith, with the greatest interest and admiration. It makes me wish that I had the privilege of “sitting under” you: not that you could often produce, I should imagine, work of such intense feeling and thought in combination, so brought within the needs of the unscientific hearer. The first thing that struck me when I resumed my impressions after reading it, was what M. Arnold would call the urbanity of your tone—the *ἐπιεικεία* with which you enter into divers points of view, setting Reason, Faith, Science, Religion, Ethics, and even passionate revolt, in their right relations, shedding light upon them in their several places, and bringing out their contours and their harmony. Of course, you will say that it is just this which philosophy should enable her student to do: and so it is, especially your philosophy. But few men could have so done it—with such inner warmth, such gravity, and such command of material. The next thing which came prominently forward, perhaps to me the most valuable, was your power of reading a new life into the old forms with which we are so familiar—and that, not by putting new constructions on them, but by demonstrating their permanent significance.

‘The only radical difficulty I feel about accepting your presentation of the whole matter is inherent in what you think a confusion of ideas, and what you have attempted to meet on page 22. I always feel that theological philosophy starts with a *petitio principii* about God, and that the subjective proof to which you so eloquently appeal is unsatisfactory to the very people who require to be convinced—those who have it not. Nor can I follow you in your critique of Science on page 13. Why Nature should not be without the thinking subject (*i.e.* without our thought to think it, for beyond our thought is known to us no thinking subject), I could never comprehend. I am so obtuse that I cannot get over the reflection of what Nature must have been before man appeared,

<sup>1</sup> To T. H. Green. Davos, June 19, 1878.

and is where man is not. That the spirit of man is no part of what we call Nature may be conceded *arg. gr.* without the corollary that God is to be sought in it, or that it is the creative principle of the Universe. It is just this latter position: viz. that humanity is Deity in the sense of effectuating Nature by its thought, which seems to me to divide you, and those who think with you, from those who, however they feel the Divine in the Universe, do not venture to assert its cognisability.

‘But I know that I speak foolishly when I try to handle these matters; and I am very well aware that the absence of a bias toward theology, a contentment with suspended judgment, and after all, a not intense desire to reach the attitude of “faith” as defined by you, are the real conditions which disqualify me from thinking or writing to the point. I am forced to feel that the heroic attitude of faith, and the smug dulness of agnosticism, are matters of original temperament: and yet no one would choose the latter rather than the former, any more than he would choose a stunted rather than a well-developed body.

‘God bless you; even a benighted being cannot do without that formula, and does not do without most heartfelt prayers and praise to the Unknown, yet known.’

[During the summer of 1878 Symonds’s friendship with Christian Buol, who had been his companion and servant on his spring journey, grew closer. It forms an important episode in Symonds’s life, for through that friendship he came to know the nature, quality, habits of the people among whom his lot was now cast, and to admire and respect their dignity, their simplicity, their pride. His curiosity was engaged by an experience, as he says, ‘so new’ in his life of a highly cultivated Englishman; and his profound sympathy with humanity in its simplest and most direct manifestations—his passion for the genuine, the absolute, was satisfied by being brought into contact with the root-stuff of mankind, unadulterated by convention—which he now discovered in the sturdy peasantry of Graubünden.

Writing late in life, he thus sums up his feeling on this point: 'After many illusions have been rubbed away by intercourse with the people of Graubünden, I retain my sense of their noble, because absolutely natural, breeding. It springs, I think, from the self-respect of free men, for centuries unqualified by caste, who have always lived plainly, battled with a stepmotherly nature, and submitted to the discipline of patriarchal authority, and severe social criticism in small communities.'

Moreover, in the case of this friendship, he found that which he always earnestly sought—an opportunity to be of practical service to his fellows. The Buol family was at this time in serious financial difficulties. The reputation of Davos as a health resort was not yet established, and all speculations upon the future of the place were risky. The Buols, natives of the soil living on their own land there for centuries, were in danger of being swallowed up by the more experienced men of business, who were endeavouring to create a monopoly for themselves. This was a situation in which Symonds's business ability took delight. With infinite pains he went into the whole affair, and by the judicious use of a comparatively small sum, he not only cleared his friend's family in a way which was perfectly business-like and honourable to them, but laid the foundation of their fortunes. A matter of this sort was an intense joy to Symonds. I do not think I ever knew him happier than when he was spending, and spending ably, himself, his intelligence, and his substance on behalf of friends. His desire for action, his sense of power—all that he had been longing for down to the crisis at Cannes—found satisfaction and accomplishment in the conduct of this and the many other similar occasions on which he came to the help of those about him. And the enjoyment was heightened by the element of personal friendship, by the binding power of fellow service—one the cause and the other the result of this large, humane, devoted view of his duty towards his neighbour.

A successful operation, such as this of rescuing a falling house, could not escape the notice of so shrewd a people as the



peasants of Davos, living within a narrow circle, and keenly alive as they then were to the speculative possibilities which were being developed in their valley. Symonds's conduct on this occasion established his reputation as a man of business, and led to a long series of appeals for help and advice; these doubtless interfered to some extent with his literary occupations, but they led to a profound knowledge of the conditions of the Canton.

One result of the assistance given to the Buol family was that Symonds moved over to their hotel, where he settled into a suite of rooms for himself and his family. These rooms became his home at Davos for the present. It was not yet decided that Davos should become his permanent residence, but the restorative effect of the climate upon his health was already pointing in that direction, and eventually led to the breaking up of the home at Clifton Hill House, and the building of Am Hof in 1881.

For the Symonds life at Davos began gradually to shape its general tenor upon those lines which it continued to follow. Residence during the winter; a journey in spring; summer at Davos or in England; an autumn visit to Italy; and a housing at Davos again for the winter. Symonds employed the time by intensely vigorous study and rapid writing; by enlarging his acquaintance among the people; by taking a lively part in the amusements of the place, tobogganing, &c.; by carefully nursing the interests of the growing health-resort; by the wonderfully sparkling, varied, vigorous conversation which was always 'on tap' for the friends who came to visit him from England or elsewhere. I think this was the brightest period of his life; in the high air of the mountains—which he loved from Mürren days—in the free communion with a manly and wholesome population, his real nature expanded and blossomed like a flower. If, in the letters from which I am about to quote in illustration of this life, some note of sadness still remains, its presence must be attributed to that fatal accident of health which barred him from the full enjoyment of his now accomplished powers, in part, perhaps, also to the shadow of that long agony—that intellectual

martyrdom which marred his youth and earlier manhood, but made him man.]

‘I have <sup>1</sup> left my mountains for a holiday before the winter snows us up again in Davos ; but I find that Italy as usual, but more, alas ! now than ever, devours the body and the soul of me. I can hardly stand it, and I lose my health at a ruinously rapid rate. There is something truly tragic in this mal-adjusted poise between enjoyment and the strength to take it.

‘I begin to fear that nothing is left for me but isolation in the midst of those grey mountains, where the feet of the seasons pace so monotonously, and the spirit lives in thrilling imprisonment, a thing alive and quick and apprehensive of all joy, but flaming at the touch of joy into too keen consuming jets of sensibility.

‘The Greeks in their myths imagined such sequestered lives, because they imagined all things ; but it remains for us to realise the bitterness.

‘We, therefore, after fourteen days spent among olives and oleanders, at Lerici and Viareggio (where Shelley was burned) and Spezia will have to turn our faces northward, and put on our furs, and climb the frozen Alps in sledges, and shut the door of that crystal castle, and seek sleep, aye, and dreams. There’s the rub.

‘Do not forget me ; though the snows should wrap me round, I shall in the midst of them still have a burning heart.’

‘We have <sup>2</sup> bitter winter here. I cannot stand it as I did last year. But I must conquer. I will still take the tree of beauty and shake the apples on my head. I will stiffen myself in every joint and compel my brain to serve me. Whatever you do, don’t go and lose your health.’

[To a friend who had lost a friend he wrote this letter, welling over with affection, from a heart which was widening

<sup>1</sup> To Edmund Gosse. Florence, October 13, 1878.

<sup>2</sup> To H. F. Brown. Davos, Nov. 4, 1878.

its sympathies till they should embrace all forms of life, of love, of sufferings :]

‘Dearest,<sup>1</sup> come to me whenever you can. Come in January, for that is the best month. You know that I only want in letters now *una stretta di mano*, not words : though the words were eloquent you sent me last. There is nothing to my soul more beautiful than those last words of his you heard. Send me his last letter and his father’s, or wait and show me them. I want nothing that you cannot give ; but I want with a passion that is childish.

‘I cannot speak of these things. In life it seems to happen that what we love, yet could dispense with, stays ; and what our very soul was tied to, slips away. And thus it is perhaps with you. I, the withered branch, remain ; and he, Apollo’s laurel branch, is burned.

‘I somehow think you may like some wild old Italian lines to-night ! It will be morning when you read them. This is what Death says to the Youth :—

O gentil giovinotto, assai mi duole  
Di torti il fior della tua gioventute ;  
Ma sappi che null’ altro durar suole  
In questo mondo, se non la virtute . . .

And here is something from a man’s heart :—

La prima volta che m’ innamorai,  
M’ innamorai con uno sguardo solo.

And here again is a very violoncello chord of love and pain :—

Voglio fare un invito d’ amatori,  
Voglio invitar gli sfortunati amanti ;  
Da mangiare vo’ dar pene e dolori,  
E da bere darò lagrime e pianti.  
I sospiri saranno i servitori  
Che serviranno a tavola gli amanti :  
Poveri amanti, a che siete ridutti !  
Per un amante avete a morir tutti.

<sup>1</sup> Davos, November 27, 1878.

And here is yet another, deeper than all tears, and wilder than these winds that bring the winter snows about us, now in torrents of mad streams :

Sono stato all' Inferno e son tornato ;  
 Misericordia ! la gente che c' era.  
 V' era una stanza tutt' illuminata,  
 E dentro v' era la speranza mia.  
 Quando mi vidde gran festa mi fece,  
 E poi mi disse : Dolce anima mia,  
 Non t' arricordi del tempo passato,  
 Quando tu mi dicevi : Anima mia ?  
 Ora, mio caro ben, baciami in bocca,  
 Baciami tanto ch' io contento sia.  
 È tanto saporita la tua bocca.  
 Di grazia saporisci anche la mia.  
 Ora, mio caro ben, che m' hai baciato,  
 Di qui non isperar d' andarne via.

‘So good night. It rains continually ; and the snow that fell for ten days is melting in a horrid slush.’

1879 ‘I have<sup>1</sup> a great deal to be grateful for. When I review the last eight years—say from February 1871, when our father died—they seem to have been crowded with more than I ever expected from my chosen line of work. I published my first book in September 1872, and I am now printing my twelfth, a collection of “Italian Studies and Translations.” One of my books is out of print (the Dante), and will not be republished. One (the Greek Poets, 1st Series) has had a second edition. Of another (Sketches in Italy) I am preparing now a second edition. Of yet another (Fine Arts in Italy) I am revising the Italian translation. Each new review of my poems shows a steady advance in the popular favour given to them, and encourages me to yet another venture of verse. All this has happened rapidly—roughly speaking, in less than seven years.

‘I often think, remembering my father’s love of literature and respect for men of letters, how pleased he would have been if he could have lived to share what has been pleasant in this development. I do not mean that I have done more than I

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte. Davos, January 7, 1879.

ought reasonably to have done, or have succeeded better than was to have been expected from the moderate use of moderate faculties. But when he died, I had, so to speak, done nothing ; and the sort of thing he liked has come to me in plenty since, so that if my health does not revive and I am to have no further career, I may still think (and he would have thought) that *pro virili parte*, with the strength and parts allotted to me, I have lived. . . .’

‘I ought<sup>1</sup> to have thanked you for the sonnet that your last letter contained. It is beautiful, and it touched me with a strange thrill of pleasure and gratitude. Living up alone in those hills, and getting old, makes me very sentimental and terribly sensitive to kindness, to the touch especially of spiritual hands and spirit voices coming to me from the world of thoughts and deeds.

‘One cannot grow dead, though one grows old, to beauty or to human emotion. Indeed I grow more intensely vibratory to the impact of all things that have these qualities.’

‘Your letter<sup>2</sup> of Sunday has just come, and though I have not much to say I shall write to you again to-night, for I write to almost no one now but you, and I want sometimes *sfogarmi*.

‘Some things in your letter join on curiously, almost cruelly, to my mood. There is no mistake stranger, no unkindness of nature and civilisation more wounding to our sensibility, than the bar placed between individuals of a different tradition and a different training. It is so much easier for us to appreciate them than for them to understand us. They cannot understand our outgoings of feeling, our admiration for something they have and we have not. They remain at arm’s length, puzzled, suspicious, apprehensive, dreading the incommensurable gap of culture and of habit between us, which to us is really nothing, or is perhaps the very allurements, the thing we feel it would be sweet to annihilate at the profit of a pure and unmixed humanity.

<sup>1</sup> To Edmund Gosse. Bernerhof, Bern, February 4, 1879.

<sup>2</sup> To H. F. Brown. Davos, October 29, 1879.

‘I daresay they are right. With the clear instinct of unreasoning but intensely apprehending personality, they divine the depth and breadth of the separation. We, accustomed to all forms of intellectual metamorphosis, to self-suppression, to change of place, and scene, and mental climate, inured to differences, locomotive, spiritualised, independent of the centres and the traditions that started us on our career of individuality—we can afford to draw an æsthetic or a transient good from relations which they can only conceive of as holy and permanent, or as momentary and vicious.

‘God help us, and forgive us all. God make it better somewhere else.

‘There is but one motto for us. “Entbehren sollst du, sollst entbehren.” On that and “Labor Improbis” we must live till the sands of life are shaken out by palpitation of a passion that survives the decay of physical vigour.

‘I shall not be able to send you the poems for some while, I fear. “*Da questo carcere basso*,” looking up, and looking out, I even wonder whether I will not fling that effort aside. Is there not a juniper tree in this desert? Would it not be well to sit under it till death, or the ravens sent by God, come to end the matter powerfully one or other way? Do not think worse of my state from all these words than it really is. I will plant myself four-square still to the best of my ability. I will not let myself be easily beaten. And in this very volition there is the element of health—not flourishing or enduring, but possibly sufficient for the present and even further needs.’

‘I<sup>1</sup> have got up to-day for the first time since last Friday. I have had a strange attack, quite unlike anything I experienced before. From 2 P.M. on Friday to 4 P.M. on Tuesday, I suffered from unintermittent pain of a really horrible kind. I thought I must die or become insensible. And, yet, my mind was lucid. It was a long hurricane of torture with short respites, got by triple doses of chloral, lasting an hour and a half.

‘I live in dread, for the whole theatre of my former misery

<sup>1</sup> To H. F. Brown. Davos, November 6, 1879.



throbs with a dull menace. It is not over, and I am so weak that I can hardly form these words.

‘I never felt pain on so august, so colossal a scale. There was something grand in it. Most pain has an element of the nasty. This was like hell. It is worth the misery to have registered the sensation.’

‘I think<sup>1</sup> an exaggerated report of my being ill has got abroad. On the whole Ruedi believes my lung better than it was last spring. But I have had six weeks of very bad health lately.

‘He says that nature, outraged by my excesses in walking and working, has recalcitrated.

‘Since last February, I have written two volumes of the “Renaissance in Italy,” all but three chapters. They are the two final volumes on Italian literature. Of course this is only the first rough composition; for I always now write twice when I am concerned with work requiring a wide sweep and sustained energy. The great thing is to get the masses properly blocked out in the first redaction.

‘Besides this, I have had, in the same space of time, to prepare American editions of my “Studies of Greek Poets,” and all my “Italian Sketches.” Harper is going to bring out these two works, each in two volumes; and I have now rearranged them in their right order.

‘There has, moreover, been the preparation of a new English edition of the “Age of the Despots,” to which I have added 100 pages, as well as a great amount of minute alteration.

‘Smith & Elder have also asked for a new volume of poems, and I have been considering this.

‘So you see my hands have been full. If I did not work with an almost abnormal facility, I should not have got through the mere grind. But I am afraid that this facility does not mean less, but only more rapid and instinctive cerebration than in the case of slower workers. Therefore I get sudden and inexplicable collapses like this last.’

<sup>1</sup> To Henry Sidgwick. Davos, November 18, 1879.

1880

[By the spring of 1880 the idea of some permanent home at Davos had acquired sufficient definiteness to induce Symonds to begin looking about for a house. The exhilarating quality of the Davos climate was thoroughly enjoyed by him, as the following phrases, written to his sister, show :]

‘We are sitting, blazing with open windows in an air heavy with hyacinths and narcissus, after tobogganing before breakfast all over the frozen meadows, from the waterfall down to the Landwasser. It is very nice. I incline more and more toward a house here.’

[But the question of buying or building was far from a light one. Symonds was in favour of building, but he was met by such difficulties as these :

‘My plans about the house here have been progressing. I have got one designed to my liking, on the *Bauerhaus* principle, modified to suit an English family’s requirements. I will put a rough sketch of it into my envelope. I also chose a site on Buol’s meadow, at the edge of the wood, not far from the waterfall. This is out of the wind ; but, after choosing it, Buol casually told me that, in 1817, an avalanche swept from the Schia-horn, destroyed the forest, filled up the ravine, boiled over the opposing hill, and devoured the meadow, passing on till it had crossed the Landwasser. If this ever happened again, it would pour first down on my devoted house. The people of the valley, like those of Portici, do not seem to care much about such possibilities. They say it was a quite extraordinary occurrence, and are satisfied, but we feel otherwise ; so I am still at sea about the site, and may be altogether put off the building.’

All the same, it was now pretty certain that Davos and not Clifton, would become his fixed abode.

The prospect of permanent change from Clifton to Davos led Symonds to make the following observations upon the situation, as regards his literary and intellectual life :

A new <sup>1</sup> period of mental work, under very peculiar conditions, had now begun. My intellectual energy was rather

<sup>1</sup> Autobiography.

increased than diminished by the change ; but I had to subsist upon such books as I could collect for myself. To carry on the ' Renaissance in Italy,' seemed at first impossible. I did not expect that the work would get beyond the first three volumes, which were already published in 1877. Finding me some time later employed upon it in a room of Hotel Buol, Mark Pattison remarked : ' Of course, you cannot be thinking of writing a book here.' He knew perfectly well that this was precisely what I was about at the moment, and he felt it his duty to protest against a proceeding so opposed to his own notions. ' Certainly I am,' I replied ; ' since I write for my distraction and pastime, I intend to make the best of my resources, and I hold that a great deal of nonsense is talked about the scholar's vocation ; men who might have written excellent books are sterilised by starting with fastidious conceits.'

Nevertheless, I felt that residence at Davos Platz put an end to any hopes of my becoming a scholar in the exact sense. I could no longer look forward to utilising public libraries, to examining original documents, and to working up a subject with the fulness demanded by scientific criticism in our day. The forces which, since my boyhood, had been directly and indirectly moulding me for a particular kind of writing, were once more operative. I had to remain a man of letters in the looser sense of that term, choosing such useful or enjoyable occupation as could be carried on without a large stock of books. Literature more than ever came to be regarded by me as a *διαγωγή*. On the other hand, the bracing climate and the solitude of the mountains helped me to acquire a more forcible style, enabled me to be as active as I liked without damage to my health, and added to the vigour of my brain. Accustomed as I was to compromise by the whole previous tenor of my life, I cheerfully accepted the situation, and fixed my thoughts upon compensating advantages, instead of chewing the cud of mortification. What I felt most was the separation from friends of like interests and pursuits. I had to do without the stimulus which comes from conversation. Whatever work I did must be accomplished in solitude ; as it turned out, the

continual production of books in that stern Alpine region—the contrast between my life there among peasants and invalids, with my growing reputation as a man of letters—acted somewhat unwholesomely upon my moral temperament.

[Before returning to Clifton on the painful task of breaking up his home there, Symonds and his wife, and a Graubünden friend, went for a journey to Varese, Florence, Tuscany, Rome, and Umbria. That he enjoyed the journey is evident from this letter to myself, who had been his companion on a similar journey in 1878 :

‘I have this scrap of paper left, and feel I ought to write to you from here (Montepulciano, May 6, 1880), in the room where you and Chr. Buol lay like Etruscan *lares* in your lofty beds. The weather is better than it was then—though not perfect. We are going to drive to Pienza and St. Quirico to-day. Since I last wrote I have been improving in health and spirits. A fortnight of rest at Perugia did me great good. I found the public library fair, and read sixteen books of great importance for my work on Italian literature. We have since been to Cortona and Chiusi, driving whenever it was possible. The drive from Perugia to Cortona is simply perfect for beauty and interest, and we had one quite idyllic luncheon, off a great eel, on the shore of Lake Thrasymene, just at the point where Hannibal turned round to face Flaminius.

‘Christian Palmy enjoys himself, and is an excellent companion, and Catherine is well. So things are prospering. If the weather seems right to-morrow, I think of Monte Amiata. But it is too variable to be very safe. Otherwise we go on to Siena, and thence to Castagnolo.’

But the weather did not prove favourable, and Symonds reached Clifton far from well. The task of dismantling and letting his old home was a severe trial, but he bore it with his usual courage, steeling himself as far as might be with an outward indifference, which masked an active internal ache.

He used to tell of a great bonfire prepared at the foot of the garden, upon which basketfuls of papers were heaped. He

recorded his regret in the autobiography, and to one of his dearest friends he writes on July 8th :

‘To-day you have been very much with me. I have parted with my past by destroying nearly the whole of my correspondence.

‘Among this mass of papers were a great many of your letters. I have kept a few. I was horribly unwilling to part with any. And yet they were so personal that, having resolved to destroy all personal elements of correspondence, I would not even exclude these. As I went through them, I felt that I had never before appreciated their wisdom and beauty, their clear-cut sincerity, their sweetness and strength.

‘Reviewing the whole long record of my life revealed in these accumulated documents, I was struck very forcibly with two things—First, with wonder that I should have retained any energy at all after such prolonged ill-health, and mental and physical suffering and strange experiences, as made up my life between 1857 and 1863. The subsequent lung disease, from which I am now suffering, is no doubt the result of the strain of those years. But I marvel that I should have borne it so comparatively well at the time. It shows how powerful mere youth is. The second thing was a feeling of having been singularly blessed in the love and friendship of noble men and women, combined with a sense of my final unworthiness of them.

‘There is one really sublime letter of yours, which shadows forth a dread of change, of our—all of us—undergoing the influences of the commonplace, and being doomed in middle life to walk wrapped up in mantles of convention, hiding our true selves.

‘Has something of the kind foreshadowed fallen upon some of us? That is what I now ask myself. It appears to me that I have gained tranquillity and comparative health by accepting the ordinary, by transactions of many sorts with my own nature, by ceasing to care as acutely as I did for either good or evil, by blunting my sensibilities and superinducing the callosity of indifference or vulgar scorn upon my thrilling fibres of sympathy.



‘I think this is so with me. Catherine, who helped me in the work of destruction, kept saying that I have become so much more healthy, calm, cheerful, good to live with. But, though I recognise that she is right, I am aware that this desirable result is, to a large extent, the form world-weariness assumes with me. It is loss of something, not clear gain, exhausted, not harmonised energies.

‘You are hardly in a position to compare experiences : for you have doubled your resources in the interval between that summer when we first talked together at 47 Norfolk Square, and this July, whereas I have remained, in all domestic relations (roughly speaking), stationary.

‘It was rather pretty to see Catherine and my four children all engaged in tearing up the letters of a lifetime. We sat on the floor, and the dead leaves grew above us mountains high.

‘By the same fell stroke I destroyed the correspondence of my forefathers from the seventeenth century—from an old Independent minister, who had known Bunyan, downward.

‘Psychologically, it interested me to notice the change of tone in the letters of successive generations. Beginning with the ardent faith of the Puritan impulse, passing into earnest but formalised Methodism in the next two generations, feeling the breath of the French Revolution and physical science in my grandfather, but remaining within the limits of strict Puritan orthodoxy ; in my father’s correspondence with J. Sterling and F. Newman and F. Maurice and Jowett, taking a robust theistic complexion, and in mine with you and H. G. D., expanding finally into a free atmosphere. The spiritual problem was the main matter of all these letters. But how that spiritual problem altered with each generation ! And what, I said to myself, will be its form in this, the rising generation ?

‘I feel rather like a criminal to have burned the tares and wheat together of this harvest. I was driven to do so by having to break up this our home, and to go forth homeless. It is difficult to have books enough in the nomadic life. Old letters must have been put into a box to be rummaged and destroyed by my executors.



‘I preferred a solemn concretion in my garden, underneath the trees, attended with the *conclamatio* of my spirit; as I said to the flaming pages, *Avete atque valete*.

‘So you see we are about to leave Clifton Hill House “To be let or sold.”

‘I did not anticipate anything else when I went away from it so ill, three years ago. Still, in the interval since then, a hope had arisen that I might live here. But I find myself unequal to it.’

[In the same context, animated by that desire to help and hearten younger men out of his own experience, which was so marked a feature of his broad sympathies, he wrote to a friend on August 18 :]

‘Looking over these stores, which I have now consigned to perdition, I am quite sure that what I always preached to you is right—*i.e.* that men must be willing to go through a great deal of prentice work without result in publication, between twenty and thirty. There is something good in all I have now destroyed. Yet it was all imperfect, and the final outcome of the labour can be seen in such work as I have since put forth.

‘Of course this does not apply to the rarest type of literary ability, where excellent achievement comes from the first unsought and uncompelled.

‘I have walked a great deal on the downs lately between 8 and 10 P.M. It is very lovely up there in these clear summer nights, with the boats on the river and the people about. I must not, however, give myself this pleasure, since I catch cold there. I have seen enough, too, to show that *il mondo è rotondo* and Durdham Downs are not different from the Venetian Riva. We live in an odd world, where assuredly people know most marvellously little about what is going on around them.’

[The adieu to Clifton Hill House was taken upon this note, subdued, restrained, reflective, yet withal so passionate, in

which a large part of the man—his artistic sensibility, his eager human sympathy, his present resignation, finds most delicate expression.]

‘Deep<sup>1</sup> incommunicable spirit-speaking power of voices. I think now there is nothing like a voice for teaching me about the soul. I think there is nothing I could fall in love with but a voice. I think I love that best, and that reveals most of the life I love.

‘I was sitting this evening at half-past eight, smoking under the vine at the end of my terrace, when a beautiful thing happened.

‘A clear soprano voice, strong but not full, the untrained voice of a girl, I thought, of about eighteen years, from behind the wall, back to back with me, gave out a simple melody. The melody was old, probably of Italian origin, either used for hymns in the church service or caught up from some organ recital.

‘She sang and paused.

‘Then she sang again ; but this time the same melody was repeated on the second by a contralto of extraordinary force and volume and vibration. It overwhelmed me with its richness. I tremble when I remember it. But this was no voice of woman or of man. It was a boy’s voice on the point of breaking—proved by its incomparable thrill, by a something indescribable, suggestive of chords resonant within the larynx.

‘They sang together, against each other, in harmony, and then at last in unison. And after I had listened breathless, the melody was (for them at any rate) played out, and I heard the noise of feet that moved upon the street, and words and low laughter.

‘The yellow moon rose above the tulip trees. I shut up my pipe, and moved slowly backward ; the jessamine was just in bloom, white scented stars upon thick masses of a night-like gloom of green.

<sup>1</sup> To H. F. Brown July 21, 1880.

‘I shall never know anything concerning those two lives—the ripened womanhood of one so musically blended with the broken boyhood and just budding manhood of the other.

‘You do not write to me. But it is well. I am not restless for letters. I send you this leaf from an almost leafless tree.’

## CHAPTER XIV

## MANHOOD—SETTLEMENT AT DAVOS

The result of leaving Clifton—Beginning of a new life—The building of Am Hof—*Lebens Philosophie*—Midnight tobogganing—Visit to Venice—‘Animi Figura’—Back at Davos—At Arosa—Am Hof—His views on charities—High spirits at Davos—Death of T. H. Green—His visit to England—Declared seriously ill again—Returns to Davos—Moves into Am Hof—A profession of faith.

1880 [In July 1880 Symonds went to London, where both Sir W. Jenner and Dr. Quain gave a poor report of his health. ‘Nothing is left,’ he writes to Mr. Sidgwick, ‘but to sit and moulder in the High Alps. If only my friends would fly across and perch a day or two at Davos now and then. Well! perhaps they will. But I shall not make any new ones. We ought to live in the stream of novelty as well as in the lakes of loyalty.’ That sounds like a programme of life; and to a certain extent Symonds proceeded to carry it into effect. The ‘lakes of loyalty’ were never silted up; his Davos home was always open to the friends of his youth and manhood, and few things gave him greater pleasure than their visits. On the other hand, the ‘stream of novelty’ certainly flowed wider and deeper. New friendships, new acquaintances among all sorts and conditions of men, began to occupy a large part of his attention. After three long years, spent in the rigid vacuity of abstract speculation, he took a keen delight in the fluidity, the richness, the fulness of human life, with which, as the following pages will prove, he now began to deal more freely than he had ever before allowed himself to do. Symonds returned to Davos in the autumn of 1880, aware that Davos would now become his residence. The severance from England, and the abandonment of his Clifton home, made a strong impression upon his attitude towards life, and that

impression he formulates in the following letter to Mr. Sidgwick :]

‘ My house <sup>1</sup> was my home since I was ten years old, and I have sold everything that it contained. For a long time I felt very sore—like a soldier crab without his shell, molluscous properties being detected in me which my adventitious habitat had previously concealed. I am now getting sufficiently callous. But I feel that a new chapter is opened in life. It makes me younger, and at the same time less enthusiastic—Bohemian, cynical, and capable of boredom—all in one. I fancy I shall not care for any home again ; and yet I am sure I don’t want to return to the old one. Under these conditions, if I also lost my interest in writing, I daresay I should go mad. It often occurs to me to think with horror : what would happen if literature failed me, if I did not care to write ? I hope to goodness I shall not lose this, and now my desire is to think of something good to do when the “ Renaissance ” is over. I am inclined to cut the Italians for a while. I have sometimes thought of writing a study of Graubünden history ; but this would necessitate archive-hunting at Chur ; and could I decipher mediæval MS. in Schweizer Deutsch and Romansch ? ’

[Davos being chosen as a home, Symonds determined to build a house for himself. The construction of Am Hof—a long and furious battle with the local authorities upon the question of sanitation in the rapidly expanding health-resort—the formation of one or two new friendships, notably with Mr. R. L. Stevenson, who brought a letter of introduction from Mr. E. Gosse—sledging, tobogganing, extending his connection with the Davosers, the ‘ Encyclopædia Britannica ’ article on Italian History (1880), vols. iv. and v. of the ‘ Renaissance ’ (1881)—all this bears testimony to the activity of Symonds’s outer life. He writes to H. F. Brown (Feb. 27, 1881), who had been paying him a winter visit :

‘ The single bottle of Forzato, which survived your *παρουσία*, 188

<sup>1</sup> To H. Sidgwick. Davos, October 26, 1880.

has been devoted to the birthday feast of Christian Buol, in next month, for which I have ready a really pretty English claret-jug of glass and silver. I designed in fancy a little *festa* for the occasion, as I know these people like that sort of thing; and I am glad that enough of the precious liquid remains to inaugurate the opening glasses.'

And a few days later, on March 9, he wrote the following characteristic letter, into which are packed warm-hearted friendship, a whole *Lebens Philosophie*, and a vivid picture of external life at Davos, conveyed in the few strokes which portray a midnight episode:

'I thank you, dear friend, for sending me the verses. I will not flatter you with pretending they are excellent poetry, except the outburst of the first two lines, which seem to me the whole. And I will not touch upon the exaggeration which your deeply stirred feelings drove you into about me. That, though patently untrue to the reality of things, is generous and beautiful. And that you should have felt it at that moment enough to express it, is very sweet to me. Better proof I could not have that you really understood me, and that the subject of our stormy conversation on the lake was absorbed in a still closer understanding.

'I do wish you could have happiness; but I cannot tell you how to get it. I only remember how, at your age, as my diaries, which I read out to you one day, reveal, I was haunted with the same illusion of not being happy. I believe really that it is an illusion, due in great measure to the slow development and the retarded self-effectuation of people like us, educated in a sophisticating way, and gifted with a somewhat complex nature. I can only have faith and hope.

'No doubt life, by blunting our sensibilities and reducing our demands upon the world, by degrading our expectations to the *à peu près* of things, secures for us such happiness as is the best perhaps for mortals.

'Do not dwell on the thought that it is locked up in a grave. *It is not*. Dream by night and day, of course you must; but learn to "live resolutely in the Whole, the Good, the Beautiful." I believe very firmly that our end is to bring



a solid, almost world-repelling, self into accord with this self-merging in the Whole. It is just here that, at a certain point in my life, Whitman, in combination with Goethe, with the side-light of Marcus Aurelius, helped me so much. I am sure I got out of a great ditch about the year 1869 by communion with these three. The whole of Whitman, the marrow of Aurelius, and Goethe's above-quoted maxim, with his lines on "Eigenthum" and his Proëmium to "Gott und Welt," helped me amazingly, as men have been helped by the gospels. Of course I do not mean that these are drugs which you can take with just the same benefit, because I know that every personality is different, with different needs, diseases, and ways out. But the substance of what I say I adhere to. Self and God, I and the Whole, the Soul and the World—these must be by each of us accorded, and the accord is happiness.

'I always enjoy the aroma of Antonio's remarks. Like so many Italian utterances, they have so much of ancient hereditary wisdom and sense of beauty worked into the very stuff of simplest speech. They are like something in a dream.

'I supped with Cator last night. A zither and guitar player—two men—came afterwards to make music for us. We had up the two Christians and S——, drank enormous quantities of old wine, sang, laughed, danced, and made a most uproarious noise until 2 A.M. Then the two Christians and I descended on one toboggan in a dense snow-storm. It was quite dark, and drifty beyond description. I sprained my left side in the groin a little; but I comfort myself with remembering that you did much the same without bad result. Did I tell you how, in meadow-sledging, I saw Miss L—— flung from her toboggan across the road to the photographer's hut over a mound of snow, with a drop of at least eight feet of wall, on to the back of her head on the frozen post-road? I fully expected to find her dead. She was only stunned, however.'

The spring journey of this year (1881) was made to Venice. It was in many ways an important visit. That interest in human nature which had found its field, to a

certain extent, among the peasantry of Davos, was still in some ways the strongest element in Symonds's life. The Venetian people were not likely to waken less curiosity than the Graubündners. As at Davos, Symonds had made friends with Christian Buol, and had through him been introduced to the real Davoser life ; so at Venice, he made friends with the man who remained his faithful and devoted servant, Angelo Fusatto, who was with his master when he died in Rome, and through him came to know a part at least—the water-dwelling part—of genuine Venetian life.

In the emotional and intellectual region, the result of Davos and Venice displayed itself in that little book which, for me at all events, is the most important of all the many volumes which issued from that active brain—in 'Animi Figura'—begun soon after leaving Venice, and finished early in the following year.

How healthy this intercourse with all sorts and conditions of men really was for a man of Symonds's temperament, and how freely and generously he began to pour out help for his friends, now that he had arrived at a knowledge of himself and planted his feet on fact, will be evident to anyone who reads these following words of heartening, written to a younger friend from Davos, on August 11, 1881 :

'About your book : you must not be discouraged by so slight a failure. I am just reading Landor's life. After years before the public, he tried innumerable publishers, says Colvin, before he found one to take his quite imperishable "Imaginary Conversations" ; and even then the man insisted on cutting out and toning down to suit an imaginary public. Whatever becomes of your book, I want you to turn, with the immortal youth of love, to literature again. Do not think too much of actual achievement. Our race, like that of the believer, must be run by casting behind us things past, and pressing forward to the things to come.

'Our little tour was this. On Monday we [a family party] walked with Arduser over the Mayenfelder Furka, a wild pass over 8,000 feet, to Arosa, and slept there. On Tuesday walked

down the Arosa valley to Langwies and back. Yesterday crossed the Altein pass from Arosa (about 9,000 feet) to Wiesen, and slept there, and to-day came back by carriage. It was very pleasant, and the scenery of Arosa is really superb—something like the head of the valley you are now in [the Val d'Hérens]—woods, streams, and Alps combined with the most tremendous crags. Also the view from the Altein, over the range of Piz Aela, and Piz Kesch, with Albula, Julier, and Splügen mountains, was desolately grand in a most impressive way. We were rather troubled with weather—fierce heat broken by thunderstorms. All yesterday we trod those pathless hills in rolling mists of thunder, indescribably splendid, and menacing and tragic. Ardüser was very nice. We slept each night in little wooden houses. My bad lung is rather overdone with so much climbing, and my soul is not satisfied with herself. If only we could be as good and calm as Nature; but this seems impossible. There are things too deep in their unutterable sadness, too keen in their condemnation of our own inadequacy to God's infinite goodness. Addio.'

Meantime, the building of Am Hof proceeded steadily.]

'The Union-Jack <sup>1</sup> I brought with me for my dahabieh on the Nile is now floating over the roof of my house. This is a curious symbol. It was, like myself, to have moved upon Egyptian waters, and been mirrored on the swirl of that most ancient stream. It comes by accident to Davos, and now celebrates the completion of what will, I hope, be an Englishman's fixed home. The last beams of the roof-frame were placed this morning; but it will take at least another week before the roof is planked and covered with its metal plates. Meanwhile, I fear the rain is coming at last. But I must not grumble, for hitherto I have been singularly lucky in respect of weather. The roof is so high-pitched that I shall have a famous loft above the upper storey, and I trust the snow will be thrown in masses off its zinc surface. The zinc I mean

<sup>1</sup> To H. F. Brown. Davos, August 12, 1881.

to paint a dark tile colour. Tiles themselves are said to be out of the question in this winter cold. They freeze and crack.

‘To-night I am to give my workpeople a supper at the Waldhaus. We shall be an odd mixture of Davosers and Italians, with one English *Bauherr*.

[To a friend who had assured him of the stimulating, life-giving power of his sympathy, Symonds characteristically answers:]

‘Thank you greatly for your first letter since I left you. It is true what you say, that letters are a poor substitute for speech and presence. Yet they may be made to do almost as much, partly by their reticences. Anyhow, yours comfort me. I cannot understand how I communicate growth and life when all seems chaos and decay within me. That I do communicate some kind of energy I can believe. But I take the word you send me with trust; I need to trust it, lest I fall into despair of some sort.’

‘Tennyson<sup>1</sup> has written a dismal poem called “Despair,” about an atheist’s suicide, in the “Nineteenth Century.” His imagination has been taken by the fact recorded by Sir John Lubbock of the dead suns.

‘What an age it is. Gran Dio, what an age! I almost feel as though I must write myself out, after your suggestion. I am sanguine, if nothing better. And we do need now the reaction of the spirit against all that chokes and cribs us round.

‘P.S.—Sir J. Lubbock counts over seventy million solar systems, and says there are many more extinct, one of which causes intermittency of light in Algol.

We too shall fade and perish. That must be.  
The fields of space with seventy million suns  
Sparkle. For each, for all, time’s hour-glass runs  
Toward some fixed moment of mortality.

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<sup>1</sup> To H. F. Brown. Davos, November 2, 1881,

Look up: 'tis night: there on that starry sea  
 The Pharos-flame of Algol ebbs and flows;  
 Now shrinks to twilight, now intensely glows;  
 Waxing and waning as the minutes flee.  
 For Algol had a comrade, whose clear song  
 Resounds no longer mid the angelic choir;  
 Nameless and voiceless, round his brother's fire  
 He circles dark amid the luminous throng;  
 And there are countless worlds which, dead like him,  
 Still roll through interstellar midnight dim.

[But Symonds's life at Davos was really too full, too active, to admit 'despair.' He was immensely busy with the formation of his sonnet sequence, called generically 'Vagabunduli Libellus,' out of which he first collected and published 'Animi Figura.' On November 13 he writes to H. F. Brown: 'We have the loveliest summer weather. I sit out and bask when I do not write, and I walk at night'; and, on the 17th, 'To-day I have worked eight solid hours, from 9 A.M. till 6.30 P.M., with interval for lunch. Such an awful sonnet came to me at the lake one night. My hair bristled, and I felt cold from the nape to the heels. But I daresay in words it will look to you most tame.'

These walks to the lake were taken late at night. When the ice was thickening in winter, or beginning to break up in spring, the surface upon which one trod gave out most dreadful groaning sounds, as slight fissures ran along the ice. The lake walk was a favourite one with Symonds, and there he wrote and speculated alone, or 'discussed the universe' with a friend.]

'I do<sup>1</sup> not think you have got to the bottom of this wild matter—why mastered, or rhythmic, or self-possessed emotion, seems to us tame. I do not feel as though I could get to it just now.

'Nothing which does not include our whole nature will ever satisfy us; and the mastered, self-possessed emotion, by very right of being mastered, being self-possessed, is already less than the whole of us. We crave to lose self, or to realise

<sup>1</sup> To H. F. Brown, . Davos, November 23, 1881.

it all by merging it. We want to burn indefinitely, infinitely, illimitably, everlastingly upwards. There are potentialities in us of which we are aware, which we need to bring into this incandescence. In the old theosophies—so splendidly expressed by legends of Buddha, and by Canticles of Jacopone—this infinite is God. There have been men who have absorbed themselves in their entirety in the divine idea. But no satisfied human feeling will yield this. It therefore falls upon us to for ever dash ourselves on the unsatisfied unsatisfying; and as soon as we have apprehended the limit of a love, to cease to burn toward it.

‘I do not myself regard the fight in the matter as all-important. That is a condition of realisation in which we get too often beaten and trampled down. I conceive the kernel of the thing to lie in the infinity of our nature, the infinity of our desire, and in the difficulty (generated by our consciousness of life and vigour) of our ever believing that at some point or other we shall not realise the intangible, impossible. I scribble this in answer to yours of the 18th. The strong man ought to go into the battle you wrote of, ought to attempt to realise the impossible. But the strong man is too often tied up, like Gulliver in Lilliput, by a thousand little threads which render his experiment a total failure.’

[How practically helpful he was to those with whom his habits and interests in life made him acquainted, would be attested by many a native of Canton Graubünden. But he was not merely charitable, open-handed out of his own abundance; he went further than this, and constructed for himself an ethic of charity, which was not only consonant with the democratic views of life which he was carrying into practice, but also added considerable zest to his own labours. Those views are sufficiently explained in the following letters, to his sister and to a friend:]

‘I am<sup>1</sup> working hard to raise 60*l.* for a scheme of private benevolence, as I wish to give this out of earnings. The

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte. Davos, December 9, 1881.



father of four children gets to feel his inherited wealth as a trust. I don't quite know whether this feeling is right. But I have it. I would rather give away what I gain. By the way, if you see the "Cornhill," look out for an article by me. This is one of my pot-boilers.

'I am quite determined not to support any man in life by daily doles. A lump-sum down, securing the workman bread for self and family by labour, seems to me money spent in the best way possible; and I am grateful to the powers which enabled me from time to time to do something of this sort for a brother. If I were really rich, I would do this—not as I now do it for tens, but for hundreds—and would always take the same pains to study their characters, and see where the cash can be profitably applied.

'I dearly like thinking that I can devote the proceeds of my labour to the furtherance of a good sort of man in the development of his own energies.

'I have reached this point, that I spend no money on myself, except what is strictly necessary for the utensils of my intellectual life (books, &c.), clothes, the decent maintenance of my household. I allow myself only one pleasure, which is that of giving out of the margin of my estate.

'But why discourse on this topic? It is so simple. Some day I must reduce my theory of affection applied to fellow-service into some essay.'

[The principle here enunciated Symonds observed throughout his life. I believe that of all the moneys which he spent on others, by far the largest part was won by his own labour.

The stimulating quality of the Davos atmosphere kept life at a very high nervous pitch, and occasionally provoked outbursts of spirits and escapades, which to a dweller at a lower level might well seem incompatible with the life of an invalid or a scholar. In a letter to Mr. Dakyns he talks of this 'hilarity' as 'a very temporary affair,' and explains it in these terms: 'We have a good deal in this Davos life to battle up against; and, being a very weak vessel, I often, nay, always, find resistance to depressing influence in my environment

produces an exaggerated mirth.' At the time of which I am writing, there was still considerable novelty for Symonds in the conditions of Davos life, and I think he did thoroughly enjoy the odd situations in which a studious invalid might suddenly find himself. I remember on one occasion adieu was to be said to some friends bound southward for Italy. Symonds and his party supped with the landlord of his hotel in patriarchal fashion, the family and the guests above the salt, the servants, both outdoor and in, below. As the evening wore on an adjournment was made to the cellars, where the great hogsheads of Veltliner stood in two long rows. There I have a recollection of the strange scene, each of the party, candle in hand, astride of his own particular tun, pledging the parting guests. And so elastic was Symonds's fibre, in spite of ill-health, that he was up early next morning to see his friends set out over the Strela Pass, and later in the day he took a long drive, 'quite far up under the Silvretta Glacier in our boxes'—(boxes being the chests in which coal was brought to Davos in those days. A chest was filled with hay and lashed on to a wood sledge, and into these boxes one or two persons were packed, according to their size. I have seen a procession of half-a-dozen wood sledges and boxes with their respective occupants, headed by Symonds, defiling through Davos on their way to some almost inaccessible hamlet, Sertig, Monstein, or Dürrenboden). To the friend who crossed the Strela after that strange evening in the cellar, Symonds wrote as follows, referring to that necessary operation, the yearly purchase of Valtelline wine, on which Davos householders pride themselves :]

1882      'I came<sup>1</sup> here yesterday over Fluela. To-day I have been buying a great deal of old Veltliner, which I hope you will help me to drink—if the *Kater* which Herr Buol's strong Grumello gave you has been quite rubbed out by your Strela walk. I have also been to see the Kulm at S. Moritz, and I wonder, more than ever, why so few people seek the Engadine in winter. It is now so much more beautiful than in summer.

<sup>1</sup> To H. F. Brown: Samaden, January 28, 1882.

‘Christian Buol is with me. We are going on into the Valtellina to-morrow if the weather holds. But I doubt it rather.

‘I hope you did not disturb yourself about the *Dummheit* of your last evening. It was a pure accident. I felt you were going away, and we had not had one of our old quiet times together. I felt the *φλεγμαίνουσα πόλις* of Davos [and the Italians] altogether at that last moment mixed. And when I get these mixtures on my brain, I madden people, turn their stomachs, play the deuce with them.

‘Now you are back in your old life. I feel that we have to hang on to work in order to get a good existence. I am too loose and too infirm in health, and too unhinged in outside circumstances, to work rightly. Therefore I am suffering. But all the more I know I must hang on to work.’

‘I have<sup>1</sup> found myself in such a mess of affairs since I returned that I have had no time or inclination to write. I got both your Turin and two Venice letters, and thank you much. I also hope that next time we shall be really more together and have diviner converse. Somehow, all things this winter have quite got off their old rails. Yet the weather goes on as wonderful as when you were here.

‘I am in horrible hot water about my “P. M. G.” letter.<sup>2</sup> It has appeared in the “Freier Rhätier,” “Le Temps,” and the “Allgemeine Zeitung.” Everybody here is furious, and my dear Davosers look angrily at me. Only Christian Buol takes it quite sweetly. As we drove up from Hoffnungsau in a post-sledge, the conductor got up behind, and began swearing at the writer of the article, not knowing it was I. Christian firmly defended me on every point. No gentleman of the finest water could have acted better.

‘One upshot of the matter has been a project to start a company to work Wiesen, and I am literally in communication with —— about it. I marched boldly at him, though I knew he was seeking how to bring an action for libel against me.

<sup>1</sup> To H. F. Brown. Davos, February 6, 1882.

<sup>2</sup> On the Sanitary Condition of Davos.

I had to bully him at first a little, and then we got on business. Whether anything will come of this I cannot say.

‘Meanwhile I have the proofs of ninety-six sonnets. When they are all here, I shall send you the lot. They are a very extraordinary collection, I think, now that I can see them in sequence. I don’t know what it is, whether it is because I made them, but I find a new tone in them separate from that of other sonnets. This makes it impossible for me to judge of the effect they may produce.

‘They are working away in my house, and it is beginning to look quite habitable, with its rough panels and floors. I get to like it more and more.

‘I lead a sinful life apart from all spiritual or intellectual things. And yet it is borne in upon me now that these sonnets have been an adequate effort even for one whole year. Considering the small effect they are likely to produce, this is perhaps sad. Anyhow, I cannot just now take interest in literary work.’

[Davos really owes a debt of gratitude to Symonds, and has now acknowledged it by naming one of its roads after him—for the agitation he roused by his article set the place upon a course of sound sanitary reform. ‘Meanwhile,’ he says (Feb. 28, 1882), ‘some very useful reforms are being set on foot here for the improvement of drainage and the removal of obnoxious trades below the village.’

But in the course of Symonds’s much-tried existence, the comparative brightness of the early Davos years did not last long. In 1882 troubles began to close around him. His eldest daughter’s health gave cause for anxiety, and in March of this year he lost his brother-in-law, Professor T. H. Green. The blow was a very severe one, and his deep feeling found expression in a long series of letters, from which the following is taken :]

‘To-day<sup>1</sup> at half-past one I got Charles’s telegram. I cannot say that it surprised me, because I knew how grave the

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte. Davos, March 27, 1882.

case must be which made Horatio [Symonds] telegraph as he did yesterday. But, all the same, the blow was very heavy, for we had been hoping and making up all sorts of sanguine visions.

‘And now there is nothing left of him in this life—only the certainty that if souls unite themselves by death with God, as I believe they must do, no soul is more prepared to do so; none is already and at once more entered into the felicity of fuller knowledge and an ampler life, than his.

‘When I think of your wedding-day, and remember that of all this generation he has been taken first, the fact overwhelms me. There were then so many weaker in all ways. And of these weak ones we remain.

‘It will not do to dwell upon this train of thought. We must live or die as it seems best to God. I comfort myself with thinking what a wholly noble life his was, what a memory and example of noble living he has left us all, how he will live with you in what is the best, the only imperishable part of us, the soul; until you meet him again, what a future of brave, good, and strong existence there is before you.

‘My dear sister, these must seem to you cold words of consolation. But they are the truth, the best.

‘He has not died. Such a man cannot die. Happy are those who have the special right, by being his, to continue his life in this world.’

[The reaction from the tension of Davos air and Davos life was always acutely felt by Symonds. The very conditions of life in that high, isolated valley, forced his nervous temperament in crescendoes to a point where violent reaction set in. The loss of his brother-in-law had touched him deeply; he had been made anxious about his daughter's health; the battle over Davos sanitation, though he enjoyed it and was victorious, kept him in a continuous nervous strain; he was called upon to settle many small points in the construction of Am Hof; he was preparing to put together ‘Shakspeare's Predecessors,’ and he was writing sonnets for ‘Vagabunduli Libellus.’

On March 5 he writes: ‘I have had a great surprise to-day,



in the glad appreciation which Stevenson and his wife have given to my sonnets. I sent them up the whole lot yesterday in proof. They are enthusiastic about the dialectical ones. Stevenson wants me to make a volume of about eighty-five, omitting all the Davos ones—"Juvenilia," the "Sea Calls," and Venetian series; retaining all the ethical and metaphysical, and altering the title. I believe he has suggested the way for producing a book.' That advice was virtually accepted. 'I am going to call the book now "Animi Figura," adding the psychological sonnets of my other books. It is an odd book; but it is all of one sort.'

Yet I doubt whether this great strain upon his resources would have been sufficient to account for the depression under which he left Davos in the spring of 1882, had he not been, though unknown to himself, growing steadily weaker in his lungs. At any rate, Symonds left Davos for London in May. 'I take this journey,' he writes, 'with a heavy heart. Yet I hardly know why. Probably I am ill. When the eyes and brain are both disturbed, there is no happiness. But independently of this, my life seems to have become suddenly hollow, and I do not know what is hanging over me.'

In London a bitter disappointment awaited him, and very naturally threw a shadow over his enjoyment of Davos. He had believed that the place, whatever the drawbacks of its intellectual atmosphere, whatever the dangers from its overstimulation of the nerves, was at least effecting a cure in the lungs:]

'Two<sup>1</sup> days and two doctors sufficed to cause a change of view. I returned so ill from Sidbury that I felt I must see somebody. I went to Andrew Clark on Wednesday. He detected active disease in the right, hitherto untouched, lung. This he regarded as serious, and of at least a year's standing.

'Yesterday I consulted Theodore Williams, telling him nothing about Clark. His report was the same, except that he spoke more gravely. He was also sure the mischief had been going on for at least a year.

<sup>1</sup> To H. F. Brown. London, June 23, 1882.



‘I have written very fully to you. Health is now once more the absorbing preoccupation with me. I have suffered dreadfully for more than a year from unrest, from mortal fatigue, and from strange morbid irritabilities. At last, of late, the sense of utter weariness has been crushing. The whole explains itself now.

‘I trust I shall see you this summer on your way to Promontogno. I will write as soon as I get back to Davos. But I have had to tell R—— that I cannot receive him at Davos this year. I must not have company there. You are different, I need not say.

‘I have made you executor of my will, with Robert Otter, H. N. Abbot, and Charley Cave. I hope I understood you rightly that I might. You are specially indicated for the literary department.

‘I am too stupid to write. This blow has stupefied me. I somehow did not at all expect it. The struggle for life is now to be carried on with weakened force, and under worse conditions. Davos is not a new place too, alas.’

[This was a terribly cruel blow to Symonds, and I do not think he was ever quite the same man after it, though his indomitable spirit and his elastic constitution enabled him to recover, and to carry on a life of literary and social vigour for several years to come. He returned to Davos in June, and on the 30th of that month he writes :]

‘If I<sup>1</sup> am doomed to decline now, I can at least say that in the five years since I came here dying, I have had a very wonderful Indian summer of experience. The colours of life have been even richer, my personal emotions even more glowing, my perception of intellectual points more vivid, my power over style more masterly, than when I was comparatively vigorous. It seems a phase of my disease that I should grow in youth and spiritual intensity inversely to my physical decay. This may be a phenomenon of phthisis, and for this reason noteworthy. I feel it in myself so forcibly that I

<sup>1</sup> To H. F. Brown. Davos, June 30, 1882.

cannot refrain from writing about it, though this has the semblance of excessive self-scrutiny.

‘Ah! how I do love this beautiful world, and how keenly I feel it all. It is almost pain to grasp its loveliness with this intensity when the body is so dragging.’

[The recovery was slow though steady, and assisted by a fine autumn. A spirit of resignation, almost of peace, such as came over him after his last serious illness at Clifton, such as enveloped him after any stunning blow, pervades the letters which he writes.]

‘I have<sup>1</sup> chosen a large sheet because I have been rowed this morning on the lake in sunshine after ten days’ gloom, and am hearing the band play Wagner after their fashion, and am reading Aristotle’s ‘Poetics,’ and am thinking all in one thought about Venice and death, and want to copy out for you a sonnet I wrote by the stove last evening. Here it is:

### THE GRAVE OF OMAR KHAYYAM.

Omar Khayyam, in life’s calm eventide,  
 Walked through his garden on a night of June,  
 With one whose face shone like the rising moon;  
 And spake these words: ‘When earth on either side  
 Shall clasp this breathing clay, the Potter’s pride;  
 When all these songs are silenced, soon, too soon,  
 Then shall red rose-leaves, morning, night, and noon,  
 Blown by north winds, the dust of Omar hide.’  
 Listened the youth, and wondered; yet, being sure  
 No wise man’s words like snowflakes melt in vain,  
 After long years, with eld’s slow steps, again  
 Turning towards Omar’s home in Naishapur,  
 He sought that tomb; but found, by wild winds blown,  
 Drift of red rose-leaves, deep on a hidden stone.

‘I have worked out the thread of energy which made me take this paper up to write. Life burns very low. It is, however, a wonderful day, most intensely hot and sunny over

<sup>1</sup> To H. F. Brown. Davos, September 2, 1882.

wood and field drenched with dew, the meadows turning to golden and flecked with emerald green, the sky pure, and the depth of the valley a blue bloom. A dying man does not want more than this of beauty, if he were free to feel it, for beauty is of that divine sort that the whole of it exists in every atom. A larch upon the Jacobshorn is beauty's self for the sentient spirit; nor can the Bay of Naples go beyond it. I have never been discontented on this chapter of things beautiful.

'I think to-day that *ennui* is the curse of happiness—the curse, I mean, of those who have no other curse. Let man be near to dying, and he will wonder at *ennui*—an alien fiend. Let man, in plenitude of this life's common goods, of health, feel *ennui*, and he will desire death. Death and *ennui* are exclusive things. Praise God for life; praise God for death. Learn to live in the sunlight. Avoid the foe which turns life into living death, with its black smoke between heaven's sun and the sun-born soul of man.

'*Addio*. I am dreaming.

'The noonday drowsy note of yesterday waited by accident, and there is time to add some words to-night. We have had a second good day. It almost seems as though we might seize sunshine for a season before the snows come. I expect before long, as a great pleasure, news from you from Venice. I think meanwhile of you and things there more than of any one or anything.

'I see my Venetian medley advertised in "Fraser," but I have had no copy of it sent to me. For the "Palace of Urbino" I received twenty guineas—a large sum for so slight a thing, the work of three weak mornings. And yet, as I judge it perhaps the best of any of my Italian sketches, I am glad it should be so overpaid. It is almost as though even Smith & Elder discerned its speciality.

'But what are these things worth, or why should I write about them? Just now it would be better to be pacing the Dogana Point with you, free for a moment from the sense of pain, as young in body as my unquenchable soul is young.

'What a strange new babe the soul is like to be, if she

escapes with all her self inviolate into conditions where her flight is free. I hardly dare to contemplate that side of the vast problem when I think of death. It seems almost too terrible, too turbulent a thought. And yet my soul keeps saying to me: "Wait, endure, for I am infinitely young, and I am you, and that which you call you is not yourself, for I am still yourself, and I am what you now cannot by fancy's utmost force prefigure to your mind. Your mind I am not, nor your sense, but something far more deep and strong and perdurable; acquainted with all change, alert for changes indescribable to come. Wait and believe in me. Wait, expect nothing. Only wait." Good-bye. I miss the talks with you. Good-bye.'

[The Symonds moved into Am Hof on September 25.]

'This is<sup>1</sup> our first day in the new house. I have not slept here yet, but Catherine, Madge, baby, and Mrs. White did so last night. Janet, St. Loe [Strachey], I, and Miss Neef, who seems very pleasant, are introduced to-day. The sun is shining on us—for a wonder. I have all my books around me; the old table from Buol's, on which I have already written so much, to write upon; the Paris carpet chair to sit in; an Indian carpet on the floor; your Perseus on my stove. It looks already home-like.

'I was quite delighted with your letter about Venice in that sciroccale. Now that I am settled here, I mean to give a pigeon-hole in my cupboard to your letters; and whenever you come to see me, you shall resume what you like. I fear I have lost a great many of your good letters, or, rather, have deliberately destroyed them, because of the uncertainty attending on the occupation of hotel rooms.

'We have all been amused with your plague of scorpions.

'Wish me good speed in my house. I am sure both you and your mother will.'

[As was habitual with him, he turned at once to work.

<sup>1</sup> To H. F. Brown. Davos, September 25, 1882.

‘I have<sup>1</sup> been silent because I plunged into Elizabethan studies. Are they really worth doing, I wonder, in face of the enormous mass already printed of such matter? St. Loe seems to have tempted me—and of course my own collections of materials are a great temptation—as is also the contact, after so long a space of time, with really vigorous English poetry. Still I am in great doubt. If I carry out the scheme, it will mean at least a year’s work, I suppose, and a suspension of my mind from Italian subjects.

‘What do you say? Give me your opinion.

‘Have you seen the comet? It should be a most marvellous sight above the lagoon. I rose at four this morning, and saw its tail flaming away above the Dischma Thal. Then I watched it. As the hills sank eastward with the earth’s revolution, the comet slowly ascended the sky. At last the nucleus appeared. It rested on a horn (called the Brun-horn, I think), which is next the Schwartz-horn, and the tail stretched upwards and above the Jacobshorn all across the Dischma Thal. Some stars were tangled in the tail. Then the pallor of the dawn appeared, and the comet slowly faded into a thread of light. The valley was deep in snow after a heavy fall—the heaviest of all this wintry summer. The skies were singularly lucid, and meteors flashed from time to time across them. It was altogether a wonderful display. The whole house was roused by me to gaze.

‘I am quite sure, if you come from Venice this winter to stay with me, you will like your life here, and feel that Davos is again a place to be in. Our house does make a vast difference, in spite of some drawbacks which I have detailed to you before. To these I hope we shall get accustomed.

‘It is very sad to think of the suffering in the midst of which you are and will be for some time. We must trust it will not prove a very trying winter.’

[And the result of resumed literary work is seen in this letter of encouragement, as usual, to a young friend who was failing at the start:]

<sup>1</sup> To H. F. Brown. Am Hof, Davos, October 19, 1882.

‘You will understand me when I say that, except from the point of view of money, I do not think the thing matters. You must put the article into what you call your “desolation box”; and please remember, doing so, how large my “desolation box” at your age was, and of what use it has been to me.

‘For the artist I know nothing better than to have a vast and well-filled “desolation box.” Mine contains not only scores of miscellaneous essays, but the whole of this Elizabethan history, which I may now possibly at last put into shape. Out of the same box have already come my “Greek Poets,” two volumes of verse, and the larger portion of my “Sketches in Italy.”

‘I do not say this in any vulgar way of encouragement, I hope. I think deliberately that a literary artist must work after this method.

‘You can, if you choose, try for money’s sake to please the public. But then you must scent out likely, telling subjects. But till you have somehow taken some incalculable sort of start, you will find your “desolation box” a needful haven for your best work. And even when you have made yourself some name, you will still find (as I do) that there is an impenetrable bar between you and the public.

‘Is it our defect? That is what we shall probably never know. Meanwhile, we are artists, and live for the beautiful, and our own satisfaction in commerce with that.

‘I fear I have been writing to you letters lately of attenuated excitement. My work has strung me up, and your letters have stirred vibrations. But I believe that I have settled down into the jog-trot of the work—mentally I know I have; the only bore is, that the friction of thus settling has stirred my lungs up, and I am again very far from well. I have a heavy head-cold, which makes contact with the frozen air horrible.

‘I am crowded up with invitations to do literary work. Fancy, “Harper’s Magazine” wrote three weeks ago, begging me to go to India at their cost, with a special artist to make pictures for me. I was to write descriptive articles. He was to illustrate. I was to be paid according to my demands. If



you could be the artist, I would go. Otherwise Nenni! Nenni!

‘I have<sup>1</sup> had eight days of remorseless hard grind on a “Dissertation upon Masques at Court in Italy and England.” Just this noontide it is finished. I escape to smoke and chat a quarter of an hour with you.

‘I have taken your toboggan from a family to which the Buol people lent it, and have housed it, and have used it often. It goes very well. And the road has hitherto been splendid, owing to a combination of considerable snowfall with the passage of wood sledges from the Alps above.

‘We have very indifferent weather, but such as I do not resent, as it goes out in frosty cloud and somewhat scanty snow.

‘I am going to write to old Erba for Christmas roses from the Lake [Como]. Our rooms are filled now with roses and tuberoses from Cannes, violets and chrysanthemums from Sidbury. It is so strange. In fact, this new house of mine, simple as it is, to me, who know every detail of it, and who cannot refrain from piercing dead things with inbreathed sense, is already a very singular cocoon, spun by two silk-worms.

‘Walking along the post-road at night, I can see in my study, gleaming through the window, your cast of Cellini—infinately graceful—poised upon a stove of serpentine. The white, slim figure, discerned at that distance through the gloom, affects my fancy tyrannously.’

[This important year of 1882 closed upon a solemn note of profound religion, of all-pervading faith, which I believe to have been the very core and centre of Symonds’s spiritual being.]

‘On this<sup>2</sup> last day of the year, which has been so bitterly full of sorrow to you, and to myself has brought many sad things, I write to wish you the greater happiness which will

<sup>1</sup> To H. F. Brown, December 10, 1882.

<sup>2</sup> To his sister Charlotte. Davos, December 31, 1882.

assuredly come with time. I am not an orthodox Christian, as the word is understood. That is, I cannot cling to the historical interpretation of the Christian dogmas. But I try to cling to their spirit. And when St. Paul says that our life must be built up on faith, hope, and love, I cordially accept that definition. We must have faith that the world is ordered by a beneficent intelligence—a Father. We must have hope that we shall comprehend its scheme and our own trials better. We must have love for all that is so beautiful and vigorous in the world without, and the human lives around us.

‘This creed appears to me the creed on which the earlier Church based its regeneration of society. A passionate belief in Christ was the coping-stone of their endeavours. We have lost something possibly of that passion; but we have lost nothing of the truth which it contained and consecrated. The conditions of our existence are less dreadful. There is no tyrannous Roman Empire, no universal penetrating corruption of society. We understand the physical world better, and read the history of man upon this planet more precisely. And yet abide these three, by which let us live; and hoping, believing, loving, wait the revelation of God’s greatness.

‘I am not sure, but I rather think that what I have here sketched would be in accord with what Tom much more deeply felt and thought.

‘It has come to me from life. It came to him from life and from reflection upon life, and from a far nobler experience of life than mine—less mixed with sordid passions.

‘But let us all arrive at it upon the paths appointed for us severally. The end of the doctrine, the practical application of the creed, is that we should live triumphantly in faith, hope, love.

‘What remains of years to us upon this earth is numbered and is short. What awaits us beyond is unknown, unguessed; possibly, nay probably, stupendous. Let us in the intermediate space of time do our duty, and resign ourselves, in no sour spirit of dejection, but in joyful, God-embracing spirit of expectancy, to what the coming days shall bring us.

‘You say the prosperous people are rather trying. I think

they are. I am not prosperous. I feel what you feel ; but I try to bless God for their prosperity. It is part of the beauty of the world. We may stand aside and rejoice with them in their happiness. If they ever need our consolation, we can give it.

‘The great thing for us is to remember that the human soul contains God on this planet. It becomes a duty for us to preserve the soul, which is God’s temple and God’s revelation to the world, inviolate. Later or sooner, all of us shall surely meet in God. Of this I am persuaded. This faith gives me hope for myself and love for the most prosperous, the most abject and abandoned of my fellow-men.

‘If you ever want a change, a rest, come to us. I see that you have been half moved to come. I am not sure that you would find a bed of roses here. There are many thorns in our lot ; not the least those thorns which our own indomitable passions thrust forth. I am irritable from ill-health and constant aspiration—kicking against the pricks of physical debility. You would find here no stagnant calm, rather the surf and surge of life in its intensity of suffering and action. I have ever doubted whether our home, with its dramatic vitality, isolated, uncircumscribed by rules and precedents, would not be more painful than restful to you. And yet I think it might be good. I think you might do good here.

‘God bless you. God grant us all, not peace, but activity in fuller certitude of His presence.’

## CHAPTER XV

## MANHOOD—MIDDLE LIFE AT DAVOS

Spring in Venice—His eldest daughter ill—His sister ill—His courageous attitude—An autumn drive through Graubünden—Notes of his Davos life—Visit to San Remo—Illness of his daughter Margaret—Back at Davos—His walks among the mountains—On his literary isolation—Working at the ‘Catholic Reaction’—Ill-health—Discouragement—On Giordano Bruno—Work—On ‘Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde’—An expedition on the Dörfli Berg—At Soglio in Val Bregaglia—On the relation of work to domestic life—‘Depressed vitality’—On immortality and ethics—Death of his eldest daughter.

1883 [THE later years of Symonds’s life, the period of his sojourn at Davos, occupy a comparatively small space in his Autobiography. The tenor of his days, his spring and autumn journeys; the trials and loss he endured inside his family circle; the movement of his own personality, tending steadily to a more and more externalised life; his friendships, ever increasing and spreading; his relations with the Swiss people among whom he lived, with American strangers, attracted by the personality which his books revealed, with the younger generation in England, which divined his ready sympathy with youth; his literary labour, the solid basis of his outward life—all this must be gathered from his letters, whose volume increased as the years flowed on.

The year 1883 was one of unusually severe trial in Symonds’s sorely tried life. Many of the previous letters show quite clearly how bright and lively, how full of life his nature was, when given even a bare chance. But he had come back from England with a bad report on his own health; he had lost his brother-in-law; in the spring of 1883 he went to Venice with his family, and, immediately after their return, his eldest daughter was pronounced to be seriously ill; his

faith in Davos was shaken; his sister Lady Strachey died. Of this year he writes in his note-book: 'A summer at Davos of much anxiety about health, and very little work'; yet 'Shakspeare's Predecessors' was published before the year was out.

'I am far<sup>1</sup> from well now. Very tired. It is a great fatigue, more of the self than of the bodily organs. How odd it is. I write even these words with that weird and supernatural feeling of my unreality. What is this hand that moves the pen? What is this self that dictates the words? What are the words, and what is it that they imply? What, oh what, oh what is thought? It is the only thing—yet nothing. In moments like this, the real thing is somewhere so far beyond all these phenomena, so tragically, so sarcastically, incognisable. The world is a dream, but who is dreaming it?

'No one ever expressed this mood. But it is the deepest, truest mood of man's existence: the mood which has made me an impassioned sceptic, so hard. But Heaven knows what softness, feebleness, and weakness underlies the coarse, rough hide I force upon myself.'

'The<sup>2</sup> last time I saw you was in London at 3 Victoria Street. I was very ill. I came back wretched to Davos, and had four months which even an optimist could not call worth living. It was only protracted physical fatigue and intellectual prostration. But it was very bad. Then I mended, and the last five months have been comparatively vigorous. I dare not, however, say what it costs both my wife and myself to live on in this tension of unnatural surroundings. A curious unreality is introduced into habitual life by it. I combat this with literature. But, all the same, I get into unhealthy states of psychological experience, and find myself growing inversely to my years and physical force—growing younger in expansibility of psychical emotion as I older grow and dwindle.

<sup>1</sup> To H. F. Brown. Davos, March 23, 1883.

<sup>2</sup> To Henry Sidgwick. Davos, March 24, 1883.

This sometimes terrifies me—sometimes lifts me up to immortality. The soul seems indestructible.

‘You see there is nothing to retard or deaden here—no business—no trivial daily occupations—no commonplace society.’

[Symonds expressed a similar opinion in even stronger terms when writing—as he was wont—a joint letter to Mr. and Mrs. R. L. Stevenson. ‘The long monotony of life,’ he says, ‘in that very exciting climate of Davos produces some peculiar differentiation of the man’s quality, which is only partly beneficial. . Lord L——, who is interesting and amusing, and is here [at Venice], asked me last night how Davos agreed with me. I replied in two words, that it made me “quarrelsome and conceited.” He said he wished he could be made conceited; but that the only thing which produced that desirable change in him was too dangerous to be indulged in.’

The Symondsés passed April and May at Venice, ‘two delightful months in a palace [Palazzo Gritti] on the Grand Canal,’ Symonds calls them in a letter to Mr. R. L. Stevenson, But bad news waited his return.]

‘I fear<sup>1</sup> you will have to come to a house overshadowed with a great anxiety. We have just heard from Dr. Ruedi that he thinks Janet’s case a very serious one.

‘There is not anything to add to this. It is a great sorrow, a great anxiety, a great responsibility. But I do not see that any human being can expect life to be a brilliant thing for anybody. We must bear it, and make the best of it.

‘That there is no way of vicarious self-immolation for the sake of others seems the hardest thing. It would be so good, for instance, if a weak and ailing father could lay down the remnant of his life to purchase ordinary chances for a child. The conception is too absurd and sentimental to be worth a moment’s thought. Life, as it is, inculcates far sterner lessons. It even tempts me to feel a certain severity for those who will not bear its burdens. Who knows what his neighbour’s burden is?

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte. Davos, June 14, 1883.



‘We must, at all costs, keep the sweetness of faith and hope, even though our own lives be broken by encroaching sickness, and we see those dearest to us stricken down.

‘Do not be irritated with me if my troubles take fantastic moods you cannot sympathise with. All philosophies and all religions are not of the same temper, and neither the one nor the other is of ultimate avail to fortify the soul. They have passed over men, and made men better than they would have been without them. But they have never revealed a secret to the heart which was not also beautiful illusion.

‘*P.S.*—Beautiful illusion—I do not mean that too strictly. What I mean is, that certain habits of hope and of endurance are generated by religions and philosophies, which in themselves leave the reason in the dark—that these habits of hoping and enduring are the profitable outcome of our creeds and systems. The creeds and systems are pretty much alike in lack of firm reality.’

[It is not uninteresting to note that some years earlier in his life he had expressed to his friend, Roden Noel, the same views as to the ‘duty to oneself to be sanguine, and careless, and young, in spite of all things—to “live in Eternity’s sunrise,” if even by some desperate effort at self-delusion.’ The conviction of the duty to be sanguine still remains, but that attitude is now to be attained through disillusionment, by the sterner, nobler path of submission to the naked truth—‘resignation without giving the battle up.’

Anxiety about his daughter, however, was not the sole source of Symonds’s pain. His sister, Lady Strachey, was very dangerously ill. Through the wording of the following letters we can feel the strain, the effort, the resolution, to keep a brave front to ‘the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune’:]

‘You will <sup>1</sup> see that, in spite of considerable pressing anxieties and personal weakness, I am tolerably calm now.

‘Out of this calm and chastened mood I want to tell you that my theory of existence is to sustain the spiritual, the

<sup>1</sup> To H. F. Brown. Davos, July 6, 1883.

energetic, the rejoicing element in self alive, as the one great duty to the world, the one function for which a man was framed.

‘To do this in face of physical and domestic perplexities is no easy matter. The attempt is easily, and not unjustly, criticised as a determination to make the will paramount. It leads to irritable outbreaks. But tested as I am at present, I think it is right—right for me. As one might say, Branwell Brontë was right to die upright on his feet.’

‘I have<sup>1</sup> been in bed two days with a sharp attack of fever—ice-bags on my head, and that sort of thing—and am now up for a few hours.

‘And so the summer is over for me. I had so longed to see something of the higher hills this year, to get at least upon the Alpine paths and pastures above the forest. But it will not be. I do not think much that it will ever come again for me to feel the elasticity of mountain turf or the crisp edge of the high rocks, or to gather the mountain flowers on solitary breezy places.

‘Resignation and renunciation are two words with a wide scope in human life; and it is hard to base our daily conduct on them without giving the battle up. But this, I believe, is precisely what we ought to aim at. I, for instance, here almost alone in the high Alps, must be resigned to renounce, not merely society and the pleasure of cities, but also the best things which the Alps contain, and which I dearly love; and at the same time I must try every day to do something within the sphere (though daily narrowing) still left to me. And that is principally—to write.’

[A few weeks later (October 23, 1883) he wrote thus to a friend, whom he thought inclined to take suffering too hard:]

‘There is so very much more worth interesting oneself in than one’s troubles and bereavements. There is such a vast amount of the world’s beautiful, vigorous, awful, passionate life; by comparison with which our own aches and atrophies

<sup>1</sup> To H. F. Brown. Davos, July 19, 1883.

seem next to nothing. I do not feel that you yet are living resolutely "*Im Ganzen Guten Schönen*"—that is, not in yourself and in the dark atmosphere which your own trouble has thrown round you, but in the world and in its luminous exhilarating ether. It seems to me blasphemy for any one, with health and good means, to take pleasure in coming to "realise that life after all is not so very long." I have not a very defined religion; but that attitude of mind strikes me as distinctly irreligious. Suppose you were to die and find yourself out there alone, with what is called eternity before you, where would you then be if your life on earth had not provided you with courage and unselfish sympathies, but had taught you only to expect the end—the end then of something which, *ex hypothesi*, could never end? The fact is, we ought to learn to live outside our own lives in something.'

[In the autumn of 1883 Symonds took an extended drive through a considerable part of the canton.]

'We left Davos—Catherine, Madge, Dr. Beddoe and I—last Friday morning. We got that day to Reichenau, at the meeting of the Rhines, and had a pleasant night above a great flower-garden of zinnias and daturas and asters and cannas, in the richness of autumnal bloom, relieved against solid masses of lime and sycamore and beech above the brawling Rhines—really a very beautiful and restful place.

'Next day we ascended the Vorder Rheinthal, by one of the most strange cornice roads conducted along shaly precipices I have ever seen—a road that for some two miles beats the Tête Noire and the Schyn, then breaks into immeasurable forests, and, lastly, lands the wayfarer in an upland region of green lawns and prosperous villages, beneath the peaks of Tödi and Piz Cristallina.

'We slept at Dissentis in the cold. Yesterday crawled up the Lukmanier, through a series of rock galleries suspended above the gorge of the Mittel Rhein—a very dismal but impressive passage, like some vast cloister, leading up to a broad weary granite pass. It rained and blew disconsolately at the

top; but when we passed the water-shed all heaven was blue, with flying clouds dispersing from the north in streamers and long trailing threads of whiteness. The Italian hills, as usual, purpler and more precipitous. The descent abrupt and headlong. Vast forests of cembra, gradually merging into spruce, and yielding at last to groves of walnut and chestnut, in the midst of which was Olivone.

‘At Olivone we slept; and to-day came down, through the Italian enchantment, to Biasca, and up again to Airolo.

‘It has been greatly interesting to watch, from outside it, the working of the Gotthard Railway. From the line itself one forms no adequate conception of its hugeness—the fierce human effort there effectuated in a giant work; also to watch the dragon-trains, coiling in and out of their tunnelled caverns, was impressive.

‘We said good-bye to Beddoe at Biasca. He has gone to England. Ourselves hope to cross Gotthard on wheels to-morrow to Andermatt; thence by Oberalp into Vorder Rhein Thal again, and so home.

‘I have not been well upon this journey—I feel fatigue so much more than I did. Beddoe examined me at Dissentis, and, being a truth-speaking man, told me no good. He thinks that life hangs upon a chain of favourable circumstances. Only the most limited amount of mental work can be justified by the condition of the physique. With due limitation of brain work, and the absence of accidents, like colds, &c., life may be prolonged. But how can he, or I, or anybody, value the wear and tear of emotions, the fret of *ennui*, and the violence of rebellion against fate?’

[Some notes of Symonds’s outward life, flung like the pealing of the New Year’s bells from the high and twisted Davos spire, may be caught in the following extracts from his letters :]

‘The bells<sup>1</sup> are ringing now the death of this year—those bells which have tolled the old year out so many centuries for the simple peasant folk of this valley, and now are tolling it

<sup>1</sup> To Miss Sykes. Davos, December 31, 1883.

out once more to-night, from the tall straight tower, for us poor waifs and strays from England, Holland, Germany, France, I know not where else.

‘How strange it is. It seems to matter so little to that church-tower and to those deep-toned bells what we do or fail to do in life. And to the stars above us, flaming in this frozen night, how little matter even the old church-tower, and even the pine-clad hills above it.

‘God is over all. That is what the tolling bells are saying to me this night. God is over all. Over the church-tower and the bells, over the mountains and the peasants who seem part of them, over me also, and my newly builded house, and my wife and my children.

‘The luggage of Catherine and Janet stands piled up in the hall. They are to go away from me at seven to-morrow morning—at seven o’clock of the first morning of 1884.

‘Janet is very ill. We are sending her as a last chance to the Riviera. I remain here to keep house with Lotta and Madge.

‘Forgive me if my thoughts go out to you, the eldest and the best of those I love, at this last moment of so sad a year.

‘As I write, the bells in the church-tower come ever fainter to me across the snow. The last minutes of 1883 are running out. Three years ago I was up in the church-tower among the bells at this moment. All the young men of the place were there, rejoicing in their strength, with wine and jokes. The wind whistled through the tower windows, blowing snow upon us. But it was warm in our hearts. I was thankful to be there, and they were full of life. The young men are up in the tower to-night, ready to grasp the great bells with their arms and ring the New Year’s welcome from them through the valley.

‘In three minutes I shall hear that welcome rung. But I am alone here in my study, and somehow hope seems almost broken in my heart to-night.

‘Yet I will hear, in the bells of 1884—the clangour which is just now to wake—the same word: God is over all. Yes. That is the only word by which a man can live.

‘There they go. God bless you, dearest auntie, and give you a blessed year.’

1884

‘*January 28, 1884.*—I had a very charming party of Davos men here last Tuesday, who sang part songs capitally. One phrase—for a very high tenor—struck me as “fragrant”:

Draussen ist Reif und Schnee;  
Frühling bei mir, juche!

‘It is a woodman in his cottage calling to a girl in the forest. How very different this misty, infinite German music is to the Italian; and how bad, when it attempts the definition of Italian sentiment.

‘We are enduring another most violent storm—snow and whirlwind—to-day. We are mounded up in snow, weltering in a chaos of snow. You have no idea what sort of thing Davos is in such weather; for till this winter I had no idea. Just now I believe we are in considerable peril of avalanches from the Schia-horn. Every channel is getting choked with snowdrifts; the steep slopes of that horn are deep with snow, and this storm-wind is calculated to dislodge the vast independent masses in one deluge—that dreadful *Staub-Lavine*, of which no peasant ever speaks without a quivering of the eyebrows.’

‘*January 30.*—I was prepared for the worst last night. It had snowed again heavily for three days and nights, when the most furious tornado rose, blending the snow that fell in dense flakes, with snow whirled off the peaks and forests, scurrying the drifts up from the meadows, and confounding all together in a raving hurly-burly. There was something very impressive in it. It was the night for a great crime, or the indulgence of a pent-up life-decisive passion. I fully expected the *Staub-Lavinen* to descend from all the Alpine slopes above Davos. But I believe it was too cold—about 15° Fahr. They tell me to-day that such a catastrophe happens at a higher temperature—in fact, it needs a Föhn rather than a North wind.’

. . . . .



‘*February 9.*—I am very melancholy to-night. I have been tobogganing alone in the clear moonlight from the wood—and thinking how strangely the years have gone here, the years which have made so many things familiar, the snow-life and the stars and frost, and the unchangeable small valley, in comparison with which—in spite of our supposed infinity of soul—a human life is so incalculably small.

‘Then I had your letter of the 7th to think about. That helped to tone me into sadness. Not pea-soupy wealthy London—though that somewhat too. No, I think it was the touch on Venice, strange to say. The midnight parting at the end of that old dreary hideous station, which seems made to force upon your mind that you are leaving poetry for prose, the *largo* of our life for some *staccato* squalor.

‘*Nay*, why should I sit down to write like this, instead of going quietly to bed and sleeping heavily, or reading half the night through, as I am wont to do?

Ich weiss nicht was soll es bedeuten  
Dass ich so traurig bin;  
Ein Märchen aus alten Zeiten,  
Das kommt mir nicht aus dem Sinn.

‘*February 11.*—During the last few weeks I have been studying the poetry and prose of James Thomson, a very remarkable writer, who lived at the bottom of the deep sea of oblivion, “silent and shrouded with the sense of fate.” But there is no English poet now living, except Tennyson, Browning, Swinburne, and Morris, who comes near him; and he has qualities which raise him to a level at least with these, though he is not so all-round as any one of them. I will bring you acquainted with him when you come here. He is a pessimist of the deepest dye, even more poignantly pessimistic than Leopardi, not so sublime and calm. Well, well. Things run on here smoothly enough. We have had a very good international toboggan race. And by the way, would you do something for me anent that? I want to give a cup for this race. I should like a silver tankard, if I can get one for about 15*l*. Will you go to Elkington and tell them to send me some

drawings of plain tankards fit for engraving? You will be able to make a choice of two or three which you think proper. Solid, strong, plain, old-fashioned college shape is what I want.

[In the spring of 1884, Symonds went with his family to join his daughter Janet at San Remo. There his third daughter, Margaret, fell ill of a fever caught at Genoa. Symonds, with characteristic promptness, moved his wife, his daughter, nurses, and himself into a large unfurnished villa, made all arrangements for the proper treatment of the illness, and then sat down to translate his volume of Goliardic songs, which he dedicated to Mr. R. L. Stevenson.]

‘I have<sup>1</sup> still a shadow of hope that the fever may not be typhoid, but one of those nondescript chills people get in the South.

‘It seems ridiculous to translate loose Goliardic verses at this time, doesn’t it? But I am shut up in one wretched little bedroom, and cannot go out, and must do something. So I want you to take down “Gaudeamus,” look at p. 97, and when you go to the library supply for me the fifth stanza, which is missing. You will see from the index to “Gaudeamus,” p. viii., that the poem is to be found in the “Anthologia Latina” of Riesens, a book which the Marciana probably possesses.

‘Reading over this letter, I am struck with the apparent coldness of it, in comparison with my usual exaggerated epistolary expression. I feel this trouble too much to swear about it, as I do about my own imaginary or imaginative diseases. Poor little girl. She has been taken away from Davos, and was so glad to go upon her holiday, only to fall into the foul sewer of this detested Italy, and be laid up on a sick-bed in this most despicable dreary watering-place. It is the fever of rage against this fate which made me calm.’

‘There<sup>2</sup> is no doubt about Madge now. She has typhoid, and this morning I hired a large empty unfurnished villa (the

<sup>1</sup> To H. F. Brown. San Remo, April 18, 1884.

<sup>2</sup> To the same. San Remo, April 19, 1884,

old villa of Mr. Lear, which you may remember), and I have spent the day in procuring servants and furniture to fill the part that my wife and I and Madge and the sick-nurse will occupy.

‘You must think of us now, encamped like rats in the angles of that big villa, with its studio, &c. We are not there to-night, but by the time you get this I hope we shall be.’

‘I am <sup>1</sup> so glad to be out of the hotel, that were it not for the cause which has driven me into this villa, I should be happier than I was before.

‘And I have some hopes that I may still come to see you, and Angelo, and Antonio, and Luigi, and *Paron* Piero, and Richetto.

‘I suppose any schemes I had of Adriatic wanderings will have to be abandoned. But I care most for human beings. I want to see you. There are many things to talk about. I fancy that your recent Istrian journey was an event—not to be written about, but perhaps, as you suggest, to be talked over. I should like a good talk with you in the Venetian night.

‘How far more plastic, fluid, sensitive, variable, human emotions are here than up there, where they get frozen into fixed desires and permanent pre-occupations. *Addio*. Yours, without words.’

[As soon as his daughter’s recovery allowed him to leave the Riviera, Symonds paid a flying visit to Venice, and returned to Davos by Monte Generoso. His work was always to him, as it were, a fortalice, into which he could withdraw when the troubles of life weighed heavy upon him. Already by summer he had translated his selection of the ‘*Carmina Burana*,’ and put together his volume of sonnets, ‘*Vagabunduli Libellus*’; and now on his return to Davos, he began the last two volumes of the ‘*Renaissance in Italy*.’ But trouble, pain, anxiety, still pursued him, and this autumn was saddened

<sup>1</sup> To H. F. Brown. San Remo, April 22, 1884.

by the dangerous and eventually fatal illness of a friend for whom he entertained the deepest regard—Miss Alleyne. While anxious as to the issue, Symonds characteristically reacted against oppressive thoughts by flinging himself out upon the external world. ‘I had a sublime walk,’ he writes to his sister, ‘a few nights ago up the Schwartzhorn by moonlight. I reached the top an hour before dawn, and watched the gradual approach of day illuminating all the Alpine peaks in their priority of height. It was excessively cold.’ And this expedition is more fully described in the following postscript to a letter addressed to H. F. Brown, August 11, 1884 :]

‘By some accident I forgot to post this yesterday. So I shall tell you of my expedition up the Schwartzhorn, from which I have returned to-day. I drove alone to Fluela Hospiz, and got four hours’ sleep after supper, before twenty-eight gymnasts burst upon the stillness of the night. The weather was undoubtedly good. My friend Hold pulled me out of a deep sleep to drink a cup of coffee; and at 1.30 we all started in moonlight. It was very still and solemn, winding gradually up to the snow-slopes and the little glacier; all sounds having so peculiar a value—especially the rushing of a stream beneath a mass of boulders which we crossed. Behind us, hung above the lower Engadine, was a marvellous star of dawning—which “flamed in the forehead of the morning sky,” ascending ever over peak and precipice, as flying from the long reluctant day. The moon was nearly full, and shed a very clear light on the path. There is nothing to equal the solemnity of these midnight walks upon the hills. Nor did the gymnasts break the spell; for they marched like soldiers, and with the temperate good breeding of peasants. There is a great deal more snow than usual this year on our mountains. I was glad to quit the slippery frosted rocks, for hard slopes of snow leading to the summit. Then on the East first came a band of white, which looked like moonshine on a belt of mist, but was the dawn—for as the pyramids of Piz Linard and Buin cut it with their silvered cones, it gradually toned to green, and passed into a mellow orange, widening, broadening, and crept round

about the circuit of the sky, leaving the moon awhile still mistress of the upper heavens. By the time we stood upon the top, at 3.45, Bernina, and Ortler, and Tödi were glowing with a faint half-conscious rose. And so the light stole gradually onward, fading the star and moon, disclosing all the hills of Switzerland and Tyrol, through that incalculably prolonged space of time which the sunrise always occupies. When I thought the sun must rise, there fell with bold impulsive sweep, from the zenith right into the cone of hidden fire, a white majestic meteor—a strange thrilling sight—as though some star had left her station, yearning to engulf herself in our terrestrial flame. At last a crest in Tyrol dazzled with true light; and in a few moments, the whole of the Alp world was bathed in rosy golden day. I then discerned, far, far away, a tiny blue pyramid upon the verge of the Italian plain—a certain Dolomite, beyond the Etsch Thal. It was freezing hard all this while. But the sun brought warmth, and showed how hoary the Schwartzhorn was with night's frost—which melted literally like a dream away. The accentuation of the highest Alpine peaks, in their priority of stature, by the rose of dawn before it reached our lower eminence, was very beautiful to see.

‘I am glad I went. I have often been on Schwartzhorn—never enjoyed it so much.’

[Symonds's great physical energy was certainly one of the most remarkable and surprising things about him. No one who shared one of those expeditions with him would ever have suspected the invalid in that lithe elastic figure, which breasted the hills with such apparent ease, and left many a sounder man behind him. It was his intense spiritual vitality, his nervous energy, his keen enjoyment of lovely sights, which supplied the motive power. These walking expeditions, of which he took several in the autumn of the year 1884, would have proved no slight tax on the resources of most men. A few days before the ascent of this Schwartzhorn, which is 10,300 feet high, he had enjoyed what he calls ‘three splendid days’ on the hills.]

‘Saturday morning<sup>1</sup> I left early with a young man, Hoid, who is a friend of mine, and Simeon Buol; walked over Strela to Langwies, and then up to Arosa—that romantic hidden valley, 6,500 feet above the sea, between Davos and the Lenzerheide.

‘We spent Sunday in seeing the place and attending a village festival, or *kilbi*. Yesterday we rose at four, and recrossed the mountain barrier by a high sublime pass which skirts the Kupfenfluh. It was a long day; but except for the tightness of my chest in the ascent, which always makes me anxious as well as uncomfortable, I experienced no fatigue, and woke quite fresh this morning.

‘Give auntie my best love. If you go to Pyrton, I should like to know whether there are any remains of the old manor-house, in which Elizabeth Symonds lived before she married Hampden, any monument in the church or churchyard to our family, and any traces of arms about the house or church. Of course I should also like to know if the parish registers contain entries.’

‘Like<sup>2</sup> you, we have thunderstorms nearly every day. This makes it difficult to plan expeditions. Yet I have just returned from another very good one. Catherine, Warren,<sup>3</sup> and I left Davos at eleven on Sunday, drove from Klosters to Sardasca Alp, and walked up to the Club hut on the edge of the Silvretta glacier. There we slept on the hay. Yesterday we started at 4 A.M. traversed the glacier—which is a very large plateau of ice, rising about 2,000 feet to its summit, and sweeping away in all directions over a broad upland, from which bold broken pyramids emerge in picturesque groups—in about four or five hours, and got down to Guarda in the Engadine at eleven. We had meant to go on to Scanfs and return to-day by Scaletta. But a violent thunderstorm at Sûs, and the arrival of the Fluela diligence, made me think it wiser to retire across that pass, and we reached home at nine last

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte. Davos, August 5, 1884.

<sup>2</sup> To H. F. Brown. Davos, August 19, 1884.

<sup>3</sup> President of Magdalen College, Oxford.



evening—that is, Catherine and I did. Warren, who does not fear weather, went on to Scanfs, and is not yet back.

‘I am very proud of having been on a regular glacier again, and that is a really fine one—easy to traverse, but sublime in scenery. The distant views of Bérnina and Ortler, seen between those huge crags of Buin and Linard, with other views of the far-off Tödi range and Scesaplana, framed in similar masses of broken rock, were extremely beautiful as well as grand. The Silvretta reaches 10,000 feet or rather more—about 10,200—and the peaks rise about 2,000 feet above that; all of them finely shaped, and some of them most brilliantly coloured with iron pyrites and copper ore.

‘Ruedi says he thinks these walks do me good; and I certainly feel as though they did.

‘Alas, alas! the news came to-day that Fanny Alleyne died on Saturday afternoon. It is very sad that so blameless and devoted a nature should have been exposed to this dreadful suffering in the close of her good life. The mystery of the world seems brought home cruelly to our ignorance by such a fate.’

[However much Symonds might enjoy these long rambles among the mountains and the company of his Davoser friends, it was impossible that he should not feel the isolation of his life when his thoughts were drawn to literature, as in this letter to Mr. Gosse:]

‘I am <sup>1</sup> delighted to hear from you to-night, that you will accept the gift of my book in its *édition de luxe*, and that by this arrangement the copy, for which you paid a price, will pass as your gift into the hands of a poet who, in his own line, is *facile princeps* among Englishmen. Austin Dobson does what some of my poor Goliardi in their dark age were blunderingly feeling after. They made verses of society, and life, and feeling, with a form that to their epoch seemed refined.

‘The large paper copies of “Wine, Women, and Song,”

<sup>1</sup> To Edmund Gosse, Davos, October 11, 1884.

came to me by rail to-day. I have kept No. 1 for myself, inscribed No. 2 to you. But though it is so slight, it has got into such a fearfully large size in its *édition de luxe* that, while it came to me by rail, I doubt whether I can send it back by post.

‘In my last letter I did not congratulate you on the Lowell lectureship. Let us remember that we address an incalculably large audience when we use the English tongue. It grows larger every day, by the recent development of relations between England and the United States of America in literature.

‘Perhaps you may tell me that I do not act up to the high sense of the vocation I have just expressed. If you do so speak, I cannot plead other excuse than my curious isolation from the society of artists, and cultivated men, and the strange sense of life’s fragility, the nonchalant feeling of being “out of the big swim,” which attaches to my uncomfortable position, with one and a quarter lung here.

‘However, no more of this. I must try to gird myself up for severer work than the Goliardi or the Sonnets of the last year.

‘But think of me without any but my own library. I would not willingly pass for too pathetic on the score of my own limitations, yet I may observe that constant weak health, no literary friends, no library of reference, are three very depressing conditions for a man constituted like myself.

‘It was a true pleasure to meet Miss Zimmern and Miss Thomas in that remote valley of Arosa, whither I had escapaded off across the hills from Davos against my doctor’s orders. I dread lest I should fall upon such pleasant guests with the rapacity of a mosquito upon a griffin at Calcutta—you know the Anglo-Indian illusion.

‘This is a long scribble. When you go to Boston you will see Perry, one of the most bright-souled students of literature, the biggest *helluo librorum* in America. Salute him from me.’

[He expresses another aspect of his isolation—the being ‘out of the swim’—in the following terms]:—

‘I think <sup>1</sup> I am nearly dead to the public, “the world forgetting, by the world forgot,” through prolonged life up here. There has been just one review of “Wine, Women, and Song” in the “P. M. G.,” and no more. One of “Vag. Lib.” in the “Academy,” and a handful of mud thrown at it in the “St. James’s Gazette.”

‘But I can sincerely say that I do not very greatly care for this want of interest in my work. I am just sorry to have won so little ground, and sad to think that this neglect is added to the other disadvantages of my exile—chiefly because it withdraws what would have been an incentive to more strenuous endeavour. Also I regret that the opportunities of publishing what I produce will be necessarily limited. Still, I love my art; and I believe that something of me will be re-discovered when I am dead.

‘Only I feel sure that if I had been permitted to make the trial of personally influencing the English public by my presence and my uttered words in any position like that of a professor, I should have obtained a hearing, and should have been aroused, through sense of duty and responsibility, to something stronger than has yet been tried by me.

‘Ah well! *ἐπάμεροι· τί δέ τις; τί δ’ οὐ τις; σκιᾶς ὄναρ ἄνθρωπος.*

‘This is <sup>2</sup> Christmas Day, and I wish you my heart’s wishes for the New Year, which comes in a week.

‘My writing of last night was sad, and to-night’s shall be glad. I have thrown off ambition and abandoned literature. This has come to me slowly, as the germ grows and develops; and now, in humility of soul and lessening by experience, it has become flower and fruit. I regard myself as a failure in what I have attempted; not through any fault of others, but my own—my own fault of wilfulness and egotism; probably through my fault of want of power. It is over. I have suffered, as men will always suffer from sin or misdirected energy. But there is the future. What a fine word that is to write upon the threshold of a New Year!

<sup>1</sup> To H. F. Brown. Davos, December 24, 1884.

<sup>2</sup> To the same. Davos, December 25, 1884.

‘I am so very stupid, so proved thricefold stupid by my acknowledged and obvious failure in the work I chose, that I cannot give the least rational account of what I expect from this Future. Only I will not take from its hands what I have asked from the Past—literary success and literary hearing. I demand from the Future something finer, something that concerns the naked soul.

‘Musicians in their last manner have been unintelligible. I seem to comprehend the reason. Souls bent on sincere expression become idiotic even to themselves. Yet I am yours.’

[The nervous strain of life at the altitude of Davos, frequently produced in Symonds a violent reaction, which showed itself in a touch of irritability, which, however, was only revealed to his most intimate friends—passing moods, which he was all the better for working off. Deeper down in his nature, I think there was a growing withdrawal from the hopes and the speculations of life, which brought with it a note of resignation, weariness, submission, which is new in Symonds’s agonising, pugnacious, battle-loving temperament.]

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‘It is true<sup>1</sup> that we are here rather severely tried, but not more, nay, rather far less, than many, how many, better people than ourselves. I do not lose the light that guides me, and this light is a submissive belief in the order of the world, for which I am not responsible. I know that I sin daily against my belief; but I think that my will is to obey its judgment, whatever that may be.

‘Madge has gone off, ill, to join her sister at San Remo. I hope and trust it will go well with her. I do not give the game up. But I am weary of things that seem to me infinitely nugatory, face to face with mere human suffering. And so far as any energy is left in me, I strive now to spend my force (of will, and thought, and purse), in smoothing paths for happier people than myself. I have many opportunities here.

<sup>1</sup> To Henry Sidgwick. Davos, February 5, 1885.

‘ You see I cannot write well. So *Addio*. I love to hear about your life and all that it contains.’

‘ We have <sup>1</sup> been having very bad weather—strong Föhn, snowstorms, torrents of rain. It is very depressing to health and spirits. Inside and outside all is gloomy with me, and life does not become easier to live. If I could do it, I should like to go into a cloister, and spend the rest of my days in literary labour appointed by a superior. What a contrast there is between the man as he knows himself, and the man as he appears to the world.

‘ I have seen more of C——, a profoundly gloomy man—nursed in the most terrible literature, the *fleur de mal* of which he lends me—awful books. If Heine’s was Lazaretto-literature, this is madhouse ditto. Good-bye. *Coraggio, amico*.

‘ Going to St. Moritz, we crossed the Julier by starlight in open sleighs. Most impressive. Such stars. And long into the night, a fan sent up from the buried sun aloft among the constellations.’

[He said truly, ‘ What a contrast there is between the man as he knows himself, and the man as he appears to the world.’ To the world he was the joyous and stimulating companion, giving ever of his intellectual best; the audacious, paradoxical speculator; the historian of the ‘ Renaissance in Italy,’ the genial student of Greek poetry and Italian culture; the brilliant conversationalist, the ‘ Opalstein ’ of Mr. Stevenson’s Essay—an appreciation which Symonds did not endorse, and even to some extent resented; but which was true in so far as it bears testimony to the ever present sphinx.]

‘ I was <sup>2</sup> glad to get your last letter. It was good of you to write to me. The account, on the whole, seemed to be reassuring as to your intellectual condition—and the physical, though so puzzling, may perhaps be better than “ Cough o’ the lungs.” If you remember, Webster’s Duchess of Malfi told Bosola that that uncertain thing could kill as well as his cord.

<sup>1</sup> To H. F. Brown, February 20, 1885.

<sup>2</sup> To R. L. Stevenson. Davos, March 28, 1885.

‘I should have liked to talk and take issue with you on some of your points. Why is Cole a hero? I am charmed to hear that you dedicate your next book to him. Probably you have learned to respect his excellent qualities in private life. But a man who has been wounded upon duty is hardly a hero. At least, I hope England is not sunk so low that we have to call the common discharge of paid-for obligations to the State heroic. Then I should like to ask you why you burn for piety so much? Do you mean the piety of my snuffing Puritan ancestors and the piety of your Scotch dissenting ancestors, or the piety of Calvinist Geneva, which burned Servetus; or the piety of Lutheran Germany; or the piety of reactionary Rome, which burned Bruno; or do you mean the *pietas* of ancient Rome, devotion to principle, patriotic pride, and obstinacy combined with sharp business faculty, the *pietas* of Bismarck as things go? Which do you mean?

‘See you not that “Opalstein” would like to talk to you to-night—to you, quick shining Firefly?

‘I am very considerably ill just now with lung inflammation. I won’t say more. But this may explain the tone of my letter—a tone which you who live in sprite regions will not take amiss from an old friend. *Addio*. My bookseller sends me to-night your verses. I am just going to peep into the book.’

[His friend, Mr. Henry Sidgwick, by means of a monthly budget or diary, which he sent to Davos, did something to remove some of the drawbacks of Symonds’s isolation, by keeping him acquainted with much that was taking place in the world of English thought, and Symonds always expressed great gratitude for the pleasure in this monthly packet.]

‘The post<sup>1</sup> has brought me to-night your month’s diary, which is a particularly interesting number to me. It makes me, as usual, rather wistful—this window opened for me by your friendship into a life so full of human interests, so active,

<sup>1</sup> To Henry Sidgwick, April 5, 1885.



so well-filled. I would not miss it now for the world. It has been, the last year, of real value to me. If I am ever self-satisfied, it is in a reckless, fierce, defiant way. I am improved by seeing how a man can be actually superior, calm in survey, conscious of the length and breadth and depth of himself, and kept in healthful equilibrium by frequent contact with the best of his own kind. This does me good, and monthly you keep alive in me the dying spark of mental life. It is rather bitter this fate.

“Marius” I have not read. I suppose I must. But I shrink from approaching Pater’s style, which has a peculiarly disagreeable effect upon my nerves—like the presence of a civet cat. Still, I believe I must read it.

‘My studies have, as usual, been chiefly in the past. I have taken much pleasure since September last in working at the counter Reformation period in Italy; and have got six chapters of my “Italy and the Council of Trent” roughly committed to paper. This book will form a sequel, if I can produce it, to “Renaissance in Italy.”

‘But Ruedi informs me that I have broken down again in health. The old wound in the lung is active again for mischief. A chronic invalid cannot work in right conditions. Climate is good; but solitude from all society congenial to my work is pernicious. The work detaches itself against too vacant a background, which I am impelled to fill up by stupid distractions. Machiavelli’s account of his life in banishment at San Casciano represents mine. And I am too weak to bear the isolation of absorbing intellectual occupations mitigated by peasants.’

[Symonds was seriously ill, and it was doubtful whether he would be able to take his usual spring journey to Venice. One cause for his illness is given in the following phrases, written to H. F. Brown on April 8:]

‘I am astonished, when I now regard it, at the amount of work produced since the end of last September. Six respectable chapters of “Italy and the Council of Trent” are ranged before me. The book has been organised, and the main

positions have been attacked. Of course these chapters are only in the rough ; but the design is there, and of course there is about as much still to produce ; and then there will be the whole to go over, filing and filling in. But I always find that to organise a big book drills the holes in my lung. The other part of the business bores the body, but does not destroy tissue. A good holiday would do me worlds of good now, if I could take it without serious risk.

‘ I am sure you are right to take the minute pains you do about your house. I feel frequently how much I have lost in mine here by leaving the details—as my health compelled—to architect and builder. It is not merely that I disbursed 15 or 20 per cent. more than the just cost, but my work was not properly carried out. *L'occhio del padrone* is the thing. And you can give it. But then you have an Antonio. There is no such functionary in these parts to be had for love or money, or both combined.

‘ I am carrying on land speculation on the lake here. Have taken a large farm on mortgage, in addition to the one I bought just before you came to Davos last. This mortgage is of a nature to make me the owner when the farm comes to sale. Altogether I have spent a good deal of money this spring.

‘ Good-bye. I want to see Venice and you ; but I harden my soul for a not improbable disappointment.’

[The visit to Venice did take place, but the results were unfortunate. On June 10 Symonds writes from Davos, where he is once more :]

‘ I feel sure you will sympathise with me when you hear that Ruedi says the mischief in my lung (present actively last March) has considerably advanced during my visit to Venice. I was aware that I was not doing well, from the great languor and lassitude I felt, which I could only throw off by working myself into gaiety, and which I persistently ignored while sitting up late. Now, I suppose, I must pay again for all that. The truth is, I am in that dangerous state for an invalid of my temperament, that being ill so long has at least wearied

my patience. My will, the volition to maintain feeble health at its maximum, has broken down. I am thoroughly bored, and boredom has betrayed me into petulance. Bad habits have been formed, and the whole man runs a risk unless he can pull himself vigorously together. Whence to draw the impetus for such an effort is my problem. I understand self-abandonment to a pleasureless deterioration. But I must remember how I have condemned that, and be still a man.

‘I am quite alone here. Davos is most radiant in the beauty of fresh young summer. Janet and Madge must stay awhile at Klosters still.’

And again, on June 18 :

‘My Davos life and climate are working their usual effects of stringing me up and pulling me together, making a nervous man of me, but curing the old lung trouble for the moment.

‘What a helter-skelter human life is—a hurrying to reach the tomb—a retardation by refinements of the process—an inevitable decadence in all of us when we have touched the thirty years—a choice of means to save the maximum and pare the minimum of what we know that life has put within our reach. It is all a matter of saving and spending—as the fearful allegory of the “*Peau de Chagrin*” puts it ; and the irony of the whole business is that when we think we save we often spend ; and spending sometimes find that unexpectedly we have made a gain. We cannot calculate. We want too many things, self-contradictory and diverse, to make a balance.’

And again on June 21 :

‘It is snowing hard here this evening--the whole valley white—and the grey twilight of the longest day in the year gradually fading through grey brooding clouds.

‘I don’t think I have more than this to say to-night. It seems funny, when I think of you in your casino at La Favorita, with your brick floor and the little acacia bushes round you. Probably it is not hot there, but damp and chilly.

‘I have nearly finished my studies in Bruno. Difficult to seize. But I think he is the only great Italian of the sixteenth

century, and perhaps the greatest mind in Europe—I am really afraid to say what I am inclined to think—well, I will out with it, the greatest pure intelligence since Aristotle.

‘As he was but a little past thirty when his light went out in the dungeons of the Inquisition, Aristotle with his long life had a long pull over him. But might have beens can’t count. So I can’t go on to say that he probably would have beaten Aristotle if he had lasted another quarter of a century.

‘I have come very slowly to form this opinion of Bruno; and I do not see my way to expounding it.’

‘Your diary,<sup>1</sup> acceptable as ever, came this morning.

‘It fills me as usual with a kind of melancholy envy. Your life is so well filled, and your mind ripens in so much genial society. I cannot help contrasting one of your months with one of mine. I squander existence. My literary labour is the only backbone left to support the tottering frame of intellectual life. So I will talk about it.

‘I set to work just a year ago, after seeing “Vagabunduli Libellus” and “Wine, Women, and Song” through the press, at two volumes on the Catholic Revival in Italy. This book is part of my “Renaissance in Italy”; and if Smith will let me, I shall bring it out in sequence. Nine chapters are now written. Three more are on the stocks. Revision and re-writing will probably occupy me onward through the winter. I cannot say that I am not interested in the subject. There is something sublime in the spectacle of national ruin. The heroism of Bruno, the *maladie de l’âme* of Tasso, the impenetrable stoicism of Sarpi, the malign fervour of Loyola, the infernal machinery of the Index Libr. Prohib., the delirium of society asphyxiated by Spanish etiquette, the galvanisation of Latin Christianity into paralytic movement by the Tridentine Council, are all in their way striking. Yet the word joy cannot be uttered. I sit down daily to my desk as an anatomist to the dissecting table—and each subject in turn is pathological. I have to deal with only two really healthy souls

<sup>1</sup> To Henry Sidgwick. Davos, Sept. 3, 1885.

upon the road of progress—Bruno and Palestrina. Palestrina, as you know, started music on the modern track. Bruno, before he was forty, had divined in a sort of incoherent way the whole of modern thought, and was burned for this audacity of vision. The extent to which Spinoza, Leibnitz, and the German idealists have lived upon his ideas without, until Schelling, avowing their obligation, is quite amusing. There is a good new German book about him by a man called Brunhofer. It ought to be translated into English for such folk as are curious about the *διαδοχή* of philosophical thought. Had it not been for the Catholic Revival, I believe that the Italian Renaissance, mainly through the work of thinkers in Magna Græcia, Telesio, Campanella, Bruno, Vico, men born on the old soil of Parmenides and Pythagoras, would have saved transalpine searchers after systems a good deal of trouble.'

'I took<sup>1</sup> Lotta and Madge to-day up to Fluela Hospiz, starting at 7.45 A.M. We tobogganed down the Fluela to Sûs at a most furious speed—lunched there—took horses again at 1.45—arrived in a divine sunset of crimsons, oranges, and blues and beryls at the top again about 4.45—tobogganed back to Dörfli in the dark over snowy, soundless paths, through wood and meadow; reached our home at 6.45. It was a long day, and we covered I cannot reckon how many miles in the toboggan saddle—some passages extremely dangerous, owing to unprecedented pace of running.'

[The year closed with arrangements for the publication of the last volumes of the 'Renaissance in Italy,' and this gives occasion to the following remarks on the business aspects of literature as a profession :]

'I have<sup>2</sup> just heard from Smith & Elder about the publication of my two volumes on the Catholic Revival. They offer me 150*l*. In respect to "Renaissance in Italy," I have already received 950*l*. When, then, I have brought out these

<sup>1</sup> To H. F. Brown. Davos, Nov. 11, 1885.

<sup>2</sup> To the same. Davos, Dec. 26, 1885.



two volumes, I shall have had in all 1,100*l.* for this long bit of work. Allowing for periods in which I was unfit to work, periods in which I sought a change of work, I find that I have spent eleven years upon this task—and pretty hard years of daily labour. The education which enabled me to attempt it was a very costly one, and the abilities which qualified me for it, though not first-rate, were at least unusual in their combination of many-sided intelligence with acquired knowledge and literary style. I have, then, been paid at the rate of 100*l.* per annum ; but I must deduct at least 50*l.* per annum from my gains for books and travel, quite indispensable to the production. This I reckon as really far below the just allowance. Say, then, I have received 50*l.* a year, during the eleven best years of life, for the execution of a laborious work, which implied an expensive education and unusual cast of intellect. The pay is about equal to the wages of a third-class merchant's clerk, or a second-class butler, the latter being also found in food and lodging.

‘ These considerations are worth attending to. Few young men who projected such a book—(I say such a book, because there are many books to be written on more obviously attractive subjects ; these will pay better)—as mine, could venture to anticipate for it a much more substantial success. Mine has been accepted in England, reprinted in America. It has given me a certain reputation. A young man, then, undertaking such a task, would, unless he were conscious of the commanding powers of a Macaulay, have to anticipate some such reward for some such labour as I have had. How many young men could afford to give eleven years of their lives between 33 and 45 for the net sum of 550*l.* ?

‘ The circulating libraries, intervening between the author and publisher on the one hand, and the reading public on the other, have limited the demand for copies of such books. The public has become a bad patron and paymaster.

‘ Only one set of institutions in England subsidise such literature. These are the universities, who make it worth a man's while to compete for professorships by literary production of the sort I am discussing. But they dispense these



rewards very uncertainly, and nearly always to members of their own body, and for the most part to such members as have been engaged in education.

‘The Crown does something small in the way of pensions from the civil list; but these are meagrely doled out to cases of proved destitution, or, as in the case of the 300*l.* a year voted to M. Arnold, are acquired by powerful interest with ministers.

‘The best advice to give to a young man contemplating unremunerative literature is, then, stick to a university, be prepared to do its educational work, and when you write, take care to hit the academical keynote; else you may acquire a modest reputation, but you will hardly gain enough to pay the rent of two rooms in an unfashionable street.

‘At the end of this year, upon the termination of my long task, I have taken stock of the whole position, and have poured my reflections out into your not uninterested ears.’

[Yet, in spite of these adverse considerations, and as a relief from the continual state of anxiety about the health of his eldest daughter, the year 1886 proved the most active of all the years in Symonds’s extremely active literary life. The list of his work during this year is as follows:—Volumes vi. and vii. of the ‘Renaissance in Italy,’ seen through the press; ‘Sidney,’ written for ‘English Men of Letters,’ and ‘Ben Jonson,’ for ‘English Worthies’; a volume of ‘Selections from Jonson,’ and an edition of ‘Sir Thomas Browne’; an article on Tasso for the ‘Encyclopædia Britannica.’ During the summer and autumn the translation of ‘Cellini’s Autobiography’ was begun and finished. Such a vast amount of work, upon the top of an ever-present anxiety, and in combination with the nervous tension of the Davos climate, would have worn any man thin, and some effect of the strain naturally appears in the letters.]

‘I doubt<sup>1</sup> whether anyone has the right so to scrutinise “the abysmal deeps of personality.” You see I have been

<sup>1</sup> To R. L. Stevenson. Davos, March 1, 1886.

reading "Dr. Jekyll." At least I think he ought to bring more of distinct belief in the resources of human nature, more faith, more sympathy with our frailty, into the matter than you have done. The art is burning and intense. The "Peau de Chagrin" disappears, and Poe's work is water. Also one discerns at once that this is an allegory of all twy-natured souls who yield consciously to evil. Most of us are on the brink of educating a Mr. Hyde at some epoch of our being. But the scientific cast of the allegory will only act as an incentive to moral self-murder with those who perceive the allegory's profundity. Louis, how had you the "ilia dura, ferro et ære triplici duriora," to write Dr. Jekyll? I know now what was meant when you were called a sprite.

'You see I am trembling under the magician's wand of your fancy, and rebelling against it with the scorn of a soul that hates to be contaminated with the mere picture of victorious evil. Our only chance seems to me to be to maintain, against all appearances, that evil can never and in no way be victorious.

'I would that you would tell me whether you only used your terrible *motif* as a good ground-work for a ghastly tale, or whether you meant it to have a moral purpose. But I suppose you won't tell me.

'I seem to have lost you so utterly that I can afford to fling truth of the crudest in your face. And yet I love you and think of you daily, and have Dew Smith's portrait of you in front of me.

'The suicide end of Dr. Jekyll is too commonplace. Dr. Jekyll ought to have given Mr. Hyde up to justice. This would have vindicated the sense of human dignity which is so horribly outraged in your book.'

'Your<sup>1</sup> diary for February 7 has just come. Though brief, it has things which interest me deeply. Watching, "as from a ruined tower" out here, "how goes the day of England's power," I get more and more impressed with a sense of impending disaster, of some dark and dreadful place

<sup>1</sup> To Henry Sidgwick. Davos, March 10, 1886.

into which we are insensibly drifting. I keep telling myself that it is wrong to yield to alarmism, natural to take gloomier and more conservative views with growing years, and only too painfully reasonable for a man so separated as I am from his peers to become bizarre in opinion.

‘You echo back my apprehensions from the centre of English life. How sad it is that all our study of history, all our reflection upon principles in politics, never helps us at a pinch. We cannot apply what we feel we have learned, and the green tree of life laughs at our grey theories. Nay, worse, the unexpected evolutions of the organism force us to doubt what we confidently thought we had learned.

‘Surely England has reached a crisis at which, if ever, principles ought to suggest the way to right solution. And yet none are applicable. Sternly, blindly, patiently, perhaps sufferingly, we shall have to live it out—just like the meanest mollusc.

‘I should much like to get some lucrative literary work. I really feel anxious to that extent about the social and political prospects of England that I want to make literature, so far as in me lies, remunerative.

‘Pray keep this in mind, in case you should hear of an opening however humble, provided paying, for the talents you know me to possess—such as they are.

‘As it is, I have lately neglected the money side of my art.’

[The depression wears off, however, when he can get out among the mountains on some such expeditions as these.]

‘Mrs. Symonds,<sup>1</sup> Madge, and I walked up the Dörfli Berg to-day in pretty deep snow—an hour or so up to our waists. We nearly lost Ciò [their black Spitz dog from Venice] in a torrent. We got over it splashily but safely. He was getting sucked in under a roof of ice by the water, when I beheld him going, and Madge, in answer to my shouts, pulled him from the frozen cavern by the scruff of his neck. We descended

<sup>1</sup> To H. F. Brown. Davos, March 25, 1886.

the mountain gloriously, if perilously. On steep, but also well-selected slopes, we set avalanches going, and rode them downwards till they heaped themselves in masses six feet deep. Of course I knew what we were about, and took care there should be no extraordinary danger. We only devoted ourselves to a total wetting and a partial smothering. It was very exhilarating. The Dörfli Berg is furrowed with long triangular fan-shaped avalanches, indicating the points we severally selected for our start, and the wild animals we rode in the descent. The snow helps this method of progression just now, for the ground is frozen into ice, and upon that icy bottom lies a foot of melted snow, which slides off with a human being's weight upon it, accumulating volume and spreading as it goes. It was enjoyable, and we all of us have a thrill of quickened life in us to-night. I never experienced this sort of glissading in the summer on glaciers. The state in which we walked back from Dörfli to our house leaves itself to be imagined. There was not a dry thread on the three of us, and our hands were bleeding. Life here is funny; that one can turn so easily out of our home into a four hours' madness of the sort.'

'I cannot<sup>1</sup> tell you how much I am enjoying this escape from the "narrowing nunnery walls" of Davos. It is the first time, for I know not how long, that I have got away without preoccupations, without work to be done, without the demands that friendship with humble folk of different breeding from oneself entails.

'After we parted at Samaden, Catherine, Madge, and I spent some hours at St. Moritz, and then walked by a beautiful lake-path from Sils Maria to Maloja. There we met no less than seventeen English acquaintances of all sorts and descriptions. But on Monday we broke away from these for a seven hours' walk up the sublime Muretto-thal and on the Forno Glacier—a really stupendous piece of high Italian, not Swiss, scenery. The valley, though it starts upward from Maloja, drains into Bregaglia; and the Muretto pass leads

<sup>1</sup> To H. F. Brown. Soglio, Val Bregaglia, Sept. 16, 1886.

easily, past Disgrazia, to Sondrio in Valtellina. This, I suppose, accounts for the wild exuberance of vegetation and the romance of cloven rocks in the ravine. Such cedar-like *cembras* I have nowhere seen.

‘Next day we explored the immediate neighbourhood of the Maloja, which, too, is far richer in detailed beauty than the winter led me to expect. A walk of about two hours’ winding along the precipices above the pass, in spite of its hideous name, “Promenade des Artistes,” is certainly one of the finest things in the Alpine region.

‘Paul had come up to see me ; so I took him on Tuesday to Soglio ; and here we have been since. I don’t know how long we shall stay. It is quite one of the most remarkable places I have ever been in. Just 1,000 feet above Promontogno on a precipitous grassy bracket between chestnuts and pines, it commands the whole Bregaglia—to N.E. the mountains of Maloja, to S.W. the mountains heading Lago di Como. In front expand the marvellous jagged outlines of the Albigna and Bondasca glaciers and their peaks, of which one sees a part at Promontogno.

‘The inn is a corner of an old Salis palace, with its panelling, stoves, pictures, armour, beaten iron-work and furniture intact ; very well kept in a somewhat negligent Italian way—picturesque and characteristic and untourist-like to heart’s content.

‘I walked this morning through one huge forest of chestnuts, over those turfy swards you know, and among the purple granite boulders, to Castasegna. It was a long dreamy idyll, of the most musical poetry, in fact.

‘Yesterday I spent wholly basking on the rocks that dominate Bondo—plunging my eyes downward those sheer thousand feet, and lifting them to the airy pinnacles of ice and crag men call Bondasca.

‘I wish in many ways that it had suited your plans to come with us here. I am certain it would have fascinated you—the thoroughly Italian feeling, the grand old palace to live in, and the wild intolerable beauty of nature. I specially affect chestnut forests, and have seen and loved many ;

but I never saw one equal to this between Soglio and Castasegna.'

[The return to Davos was made over the Splügen, and, as Symonds writes to Roden Noel, the party had 'three jolly days at Reichenau, exploring the demesne of the old castle of Rhäzüns,' a place which fascinated Symonds by its grim situation above the valley of the Hinter Rhein. The autumn ended with an attempt to penetrate the Averserthal.]

'I have<sup>1</sup> been wandering again, partly for my eyes' sake. Walked one day up to Fluela. Had a superb night ascent of the Schwartzhorn, with an indescribably splendid morning star, and a long autumnal dawning round the Alpine circle. Walked with Catherine over the Kuhalpthal and Tuorsthal to Bergün—seven hours—the finest piece of scenery in this neighbourhood, and I have only accidentally stumbled on it. Drove to Stalla on the Julier in order to penetrate into the mysterious valley of Avers—a valley about thirty miles in length, blocked by the Septimer at the head and by terrific gorges (so they say) at the exit into Splügen. There the weather broke, and the good old host told us we might be snowed up in Avers for at least a fortnight, perhaps six months, and must certainly then live on rye and milk and cheese and dry flesh without wine. Like the old man in "Excelsior," he warned us off. We rushed back with extra post, and here we are again.

'October 15.—I have just made a discovery of this and another unfinished letter, the second to the Editor of the "Fortnightly," both of which I thought I had completed and sent to their addresses. This, I fear, is only too characteristic of me, and of the state in which I keep my papers, to demand more than the ordinary apologies.

'Well, what I thought I had already written to you was an apology for my hasty remark to A——, that you had from me so and so much money for him. He shall hear from me how it is, and that I have plenty of things to do with my money

<sup>1</sup> To H. F. Brown. Davos, October 8, 1886.



besides sending him lump sums of two or three hundred francs four or five times a year. Only, I cannot jabber this out in Italian as fluent as that which I heard you producing last night in a dream I had of you and some Venetian workmen. You overwhelmed the fellows with voluble argument, expostulation, and abuse—mingled *à la* Cellini.

‘Of course the humour of my brain came out of this Cellini translation, which I have been pushing vigorously forward till, last night, I completed half of the whole. I find it a stiff exhausting job. It makes demands upon every department in the faculty of language.

‘Could you do me this service? Ask your locksmith, the man who made your staircase railings, what the exact meaning of “*bandelle*,” when used in relation to a prison door, may be. I want to hit the precise significance of this feature in a door, in order to explain some hazy points about Cellini’s escape from St. Angelo.

‘And now, since I have asked one service, I will ask another. It is this. Do you know of any book which treats of the old modes of reckoning time in Italy? They reckoned differently in different places, and at different seasons of the year. Half the picturesque value of a narration, in which the exact hour of day or night means something, is lost if one cannot present the moment in time to an English reader.

‘You ask me a question which I will at this late season answer. It was whether I know of anybody who has treated the ethics of tyrannicide in Italy outside my book. I can point to no source. I collected all I could find, scattered in the histories I read, upon the subject; but, except the few pages in Machiavelli, to which I must have given reference, I have never come across a treatment of the subject on principles. The Jesuits at a somewhat late date, Mariana, for example, did so in the polemical works of ethical philosophy they prepared against Protestant princes. But the far more interesting question of tyrannicide in Renaissance Italy was discussed partly upon the records of Plutarch, &c., and partly upon the authority of Thomas Aquinas.’

‘I have<sup>1</sup> just finished the translation of Cellini, just before midnight. And I remember that on this 10th of November, in the year 1864, I married my wife at Hastings.

‘Strange and curious reminiscence—for me at least. How little did I then think what the twenty-two years now elapsed would bring me; how much of physical weakness through long early times of waiting, how much of struggle and of pleasure; how much in the last fourteen years of this long period (since I first began to print books) of perpetual literary labour.

‘God be praised for it all. Looking back over that long space of time, I see how I have been inevitably moulded into the sort of artist which I am. The work which I have done, when compared with my then expectations, is enormous; but, compared with what it ought to have been, if my life had not by ill-health been continuously warped, and by will continuously directed to the most convenient channels, appears in my eyes very poor. I see its defects far more than its qualities; for the defects remain inherent in the production, while no one but myself can estimate the cost of that production.

‘So will it probably be with any one who takes a candid reckoning of all his doings after such a lapse of time.

‘Pardon me if I write thus much about myself. I have been living into a personality which was nothing if not self-expressive. Also, I want someone to speak to, here alone, when the moon is sailing out there through turbid clouds above the chary snow. Alone to-night, however, I was not, while I brought my work to its conclusion. My wife sat by me—for she is interested in Cellini—having often held the pen while I dictated.

‘The whirligig of time astounds me at whiles. I do not know how it is, we do not seem to heed it for weeks, and months, and years; and then, on some occasion, its inevitable, slow, sly, swift, progressive, many-featured movement makes itself appallingly felt. At such moments I know not verily whether I am one man or a hundred men, dead, living, and to

<sup>1</sup> To H. F. Brown. Davos, November 10, 1886.

be, compacted in a something I call I, which is not I, but rather an expression of unapprehended forces.'

[On the proper relation of a man's work to his human surroundings; on the duty of keeping unselfishly humane in the midst of the centripetal tendencies of literary work, he expresses the following views, which are in reality an expansion of his favourite axiom, that 'life is more than literature':]

'I am averse to calling any life, which is lived out to the full, either selfish or useless. It is tantamount to blaming God, in my opinion, to be critical of human activity in its various forms. But I often recognise in myself, and sometimes in people round me, the error of making what we call our work, which is usually our easiest form of occupation, an excuse for laziness in discharging the kindly offices of kinship, society, and friendship. The fact, of course, is that any sphere of activity which absorbs a man or woman, demands the whole being's forces.

'The spirit in which people do the work they have chosen is undoubtedly much; but I seem to divine a nobler type of character, which constantly makes sacrifice even of the chosen work to what I will only describe as geniality, kindliness, sympathetic presence, the diffusion of affection over all surrounding it.'

[The excessive literary activity of the year 1886 was followed by a period of great vital depression, from the New Year onwards into April. As was so often the case with Symonds, the lowering of his vitality seems to bring the deep-lying preoccupation of the man, the ground-work and centre of his nature, into its proper prominence. As after his illness at Clifton in 1877, after his disappointment in London in 1882, so now his speculations revert to the great questions of life and conduct. His remarks are called forth by the receipt of Mr. Sidgwick's Diary.] 1887

'If I<sup>1</sup> have not written to you earlier respecting your Diary for January 7, it is not through lack of interest and

<sup>1</sup> To Henry Sidgwick. Davos, March 5, 1887.

sympathy. When I come to speak about myself, I will tell you the hindrances I have had to contend against, and the difficulties in which I still find myself placed.

‘You will of course know that I am alluding to the passage of your Diary, in which you announce your expectation of having to abandon in this life the hope of obtaining proof of the individual soul’s existence as a consciousness beyond death. What this implies for yourself, in its bearings I mean, upon Moral Philosophy, and its bearings upon the sustained quest of twenty years, I am able to appreciate.

‘And I may add that it was for myself also a solemn moment, when I read that paragraph in the Diary, through the measured sentences of which a certain subdued glow of passion seemed to burn. I do not pretend that I had ever fixed my views of human conduct clearly or hopefully upon the proof of immortality to our ordinary experience. I do not deny that I never had any confidence in the method you were taking to obtain the proof. I will further confess that, had you gained the proof, this result would have enormously aggravated the troubles of my life, by cutting off the possibility of resumption into the personal-unconscious which our present incertitude leaves open to my sanguine hope.

‘Ethics, I feel, can take care of themselves—that is to say, human beings in social relations will always be able to form codes of conduct, profitable to the organism and coercive of the individual to the service of its uses. In humanity, as in nature, “*est Deus, quis Deus incertum.*”

‘I have no apprehension for civil law and social and domestic institutions, even though the permanence of personal consciousness after this life remain undemonstrated. Those things are necessary for our race, of whose position in the universe we are at present mainly ignorant; and a sanction of some sort, appealing to imagination, emotion, unformulated onward impulses, will always be forthcoming. Man has only had about 6,000 years of memory upon this planet; and the most grudging physicists accord him between ten and twenty millions to come. Dislocations of ethical systems, attended by much human misery, possibly also by retrograde epochs of

civilisation, are likely to ensue. History, if it teaches anything in its little span of past time, prepares us to expect such phases in the incalculably longer future. But our faith lies in this : that God, in the world, and in humanity as a portion of the world, effectuates Himself, and cannot fail to do so. I do not see, therefore, why we should be downcast if we cannot base morality upon a conscious immortality of the individual.

‘But I do see that, until that immortality of the individual is irrefragably demonstrated, the sweet, the immeasurably precious hope of ending with this life the ache and languor of existence, remains open to burdened human personalities.

‘A sublime system of ethics seems to me capable of being based, in its turn, upon that hope of extinction. Demonstration, *ex argumento ipso*, will not here be attained. But I am of opinion that the persuasion, if it comes to be reasonably entertained, of man’s surcease from consciousness when this life closes, will afford quite as good a basis for submission to duty as any expectation of continuance in its double aspect of hope and fear has lately been.

‘This long monologue is only the expression of that interest and sympathy whereof I spoke at the beginning of my letter, and of the deep feelings which your Diary aroused in me.

‘Our points of view with regard to the problems in question are so different, you being the critic and constructor of philosophy, I the creature of intense personal instincts, and the student more as poet than historian of the past, that I can well believe I shall have bored you with flimsy reveries.

‘Now I will come back to the affairs of this *Naturwesen*. Ever since you left us in the summer, I have been suffering from a chronic inflammation of the eyes. This made my literary work painful. And I was under obligations to do a heavy bit before the end of the year. I translated Cellini’s “Memoirs” into English. Under this pressure I broke down, and I have been seriously ill for more than two months with a very exhausting fever. It is of the nature of ague, I think, and has implicated the lungs. The result is that now I spend wretched days of helpless prostration without brain, suffering



in every joint, alternately icy cold and burning hot, sleepless at night or pursued by tedious dreams, incapable of moving beyond my house and its wooden shed outside, the mere shadow and vision of a man.

‘I really do not know why any one who has to suffer in this life should wish to go on living. I know that I am hardly the man to say this; for I have had exceptional good things here compared with myriads of my fellow-creatures. But in so far as I have suffered, it has always been borne in upon me that not to have to live again would be the boon for which I would bless God, and for the certitude of which I would more contentedly agree to do my duty.

‘Our two girls, Lotta and Madge, are in London with Miss North, learning and enjoying greatly. Here it goes on as usual with the small remnant of us. *Addio.*’

‘I have<sup>1</sup> just come home and found your March Diary, which is intensely interesting on several grounds. What interests me most is your meditation called forth by a letter I wrote about the relation of morality to our belief in immortality. I wrote that in the hope that you might answer. I cannot see why we should attempt to demonstrate such felt things as Morality, Beauty, God, or why we should cumber ourselves with searchings after a life “im seligen Jenseits.” It is, no doubt, quite idiosyncratic on my part to prefer the prospect of extinction. But I am no more sure of getting this than you are of getting a prolongation of conscious being. So, as far as morality goes, we are just at the same point; and if I behave worse than you, which I assuredly do, it is not due to my not having a firm expectation of immortality.

‘Why should not morality rest upon legality, as it does always in the first place, and on the social need of approval—self-respect?

‘So far as I am moral at all, it is not from a sense of Duty. I think a great deal of humbug has been talked about this word, which in the course of some centuries will be analysed away into the real principles of action it has masked.

<sup>1</sup> To Henry Sidgwick. Davos, April 6, 1887.



‘The only sure thing is that we have to live and have to die—why either we do not now know ; if we come to know, well ; and there is no harm in seeking to discover the why and the whereto ; but meanwhile we ought to be able to get on without it. Least of all ought we to rely upon an unproved bribe and unproved deterrent for right action. The problem about this bribe and this deterrent being insoluble, as you observe, by all methods, were it not well to accept the fact boldly, and leave ourselves resolutely in the hands of that power which put us here ? This is not Comtism. The miserable spectre of humanity is quite *de trop*. He calls this the *Grand Être*, doesn’t he ?

‘I am so indebted to you for writing what you think about these matters, that you must excuse the crude tone I take in order to elicit more of the same sort.

‘Indeed I do not think of the problem without great tenderness and deep searchings of heart now.

‘I have been ill since Christmas, and a long sojourn away from Davos was recommended. I left last Thursday, but was too weak to travel fast. I meant to go to Venice after spending a week at Ragatz. At this latter place I heard alarming news about Janet on Sunday. I came here to-day.

‘How am I to help her if she asks for help ? I have my own answer : which is unlimited submission to the Supreme will, resolute abstention from all imaginative efforts to forecast the future, sustained belief that come what may the world is not diabolically ordered. This is only what Socrates in Plato told his judges. But is this not enough to live and be a man and act and die by ?

‘The impulse of curiosity I am not such a fool as to ignore, and I honour every effort which may render mankind clearer upon the great issue. But I cannot divest myself of the *Ahnung* that such solution of the problem as our very limited reason may arrive at will not greatly affect either our conduct or our happiness. And at present, at all events, we have to live and die without the gratification of our curiosity.

‘There is something grim in all this. But everything has a grim side. The hopeful point is that the total sum of

things has so many sides which are not grim. This hypothesis of immortality seems to me also to be a phase in morality out of which we are passing.'

[Writing about this time to Roden Noel, he says : ' I should call my own attitude a spiritualised stoicism rather than Calvinism ; the latter assumed *inequality* in the divine dealings with man. All my notions about law and the homogeneity of the universe lead me to expect absolute equality. I am therefore in the peculiar position of an optimist, who is prepared to accept extinction. This enables me to feel a really passionate interest in the spectacle of the universe, and a firm conviction that its apparent injustice and inequalities must have a meaning, imply *a good in process*. At the back of my thought lie two perceptions—(1) our incapacity to formulate the future and what we want in it ; (2) our right to assume that manly acquiescence, combined with continued effort to get the utmost out of our lives by work in our own way, is the best preparation for any grace that may be granted to us.'

On April 7 the long-dreaded blow fell upon Symonds and his family. His eldest daughter died at Davos. How this event, coming in the middle of his earnest correspondence with his friend, upon the profoundest of all topics, brought to light the innate, passionate addiction to the barest, nakedest, purest Truth, stripped of all integuments, of all that was removable, of all that might be suspected as attractive ornamentation, Truth as it appeared Truth to his intelligence, is clear in the following words, so passionate in their icy coldness :]

'The pain<sup>1</sup> of losing Janet was very great, and the *desiderium* will remain permanent. There seems to be something pitiful in this extinction of a nature formed for really noble life. It is extraordinary from how many unexpected quarters the echo of her personality, the impression she made on those who knew a little of her, comes to us.

'You tell me that you have "no consolation to offer."

<sup>1</sup> To Henry Sidgwick. Davos, April 14, 1887.

But really I do not want any. I know that I cannot get any. The loss is there, and may not be made up to me. I have long since bent and schooled myself to expect no consolation of the ordinary sort. And I do not think I feel less brightly and less resignedly than those who are basing their hopes upon unimaginable re-uniting with their loved ones, in heaven only knows what planet. You go on to say that "despair in our ignorance is the prompting of blind passion, not of reason." I have no comprehension what "despair" is. I have ceased to wish for immortality, and therefore ceased to hope for it. If I am to have it, I have it at the hand of the same Power which gave me mortal life. If I am not to have it, is a matter of contentment to me; for I have found that all life is a struggle, and neither for myself nor my fellow-creatures do I desire the prolongation of the struggle. Being what we are, it is obvious that the continuation of consciousness in us must entail a toilsome *Entwicklung*.

'So I am content to leave these things until the very end, until the very new beginning if that comes, upon the knees of It, of Him, who is for me responsible.

'Such a word as "despair," the counterpart of hope in personal immortality, does not exist in my vocabulary. This fact I have tested while sitting by my daughter's corpse, while consigning it to the earth. And I want to utter this now, because, as you observe, "the perplexities of theory have strangely entwined themselves with the inexorabilities of life in our correspondence."

'The net result of my present experience is to corroborate my previous opinions. It has roused in me no new longings, no new regrets, laid its finger on no lurking hope and no concealed despair. Only it has confirmed my conviction that the main point in the whole position is that of Euripides, τοὺς ζῶντας εὖ ἔρᾱν. Upon this point I have only the purest satisfaction with regard to Janet. She attained to spiritual perfection in her life. What troubles me about myself is the sense of shortcomings, rendering the part I play in life less worthy of man's station in the world.

'I have proved in my own person that St. Paul was wrong

when he exclaimed, "If Christ be not risen, then are we of men most wretched." We may be happy and calm and submissive to the supreme order, to Zeus and ἡ πεπρωμένη, without a resurrection. I perceive that his *argumenta ad hominem* in 1 Cor. xv., "Else what shall they do that are baptised for the dead," &c., "If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus," &c., are blots upon the splendid inspiration of his rhetoric, appeals to human love of profit. Love and good, and the desire for righteousness, do not need the bribe of immortality, and have to be reasoned now upon quite different principles.

'I would not willingly bore you with these observations, but it is incumbent upon me to tell you how the last week of severance from my first-born has acted like a test upon the convictions I began to express some weeks ago.'

## CHAPTER XVI

## MANHOOD—LAST YEARS AT DAVOS

Visit to England—Back at Davos—Work—Cellini's 'Autobiography'—  
 'Essays, Speculative and Suggestive'—Walks among the moun-  
 tains—Life at Davos—'Cellini' appears, and he begins 'Carlo  
 Gozzi'—Toboggan races and a great snowfall—On Creighton's  
 'History of the Papacy'—A gradual failure of physical force—  
 Visit to Venice—Returns to Davos—Ill in the summer and autumn  
 —The Davos gymnasium—A spring drive in the Vorder Rhein-  
 thal—'Autobiography'—Journey to Venice—Returns to Davos—  
 Still unwell—Takes the influenza—Publication of 'Essays, Specu-  
 lative and Suggestive'—Proposals for the 'Life of Michel Angelo'—  
 Work upon that book—Symonds's estimate of a literary life.

[SYMONDS, his wife, and youngest daughter went to England 1887  
 in the late spring of 1887. As a corrective for the tension of  
 life at Davos, Symonds found these English journeys most  
 salutary. 'Now that I no longer am stirred up by the bustle,'  
 he writes from Davos, 'England seems to have brought me  
 back to normal tone—the ordinary mode of being and thinking  
 proper to people of our condition and education.'

When he settled down again at Davos, in the middle of  
 July, it was to the round of Davos life which had now grown  
 habitual to him—hard work, long walks, lively interest in the  
 place and the people.

The translation of Cellini's 'Autobiography' was occupying  
 most of his attention, but he was also beginning to put in order  
 his 'Essays, Speculative and Suggestive.'

'If<sup>1</sup> I had known beforehand what a trouble this transla-  
 tion of Cellini would have been, I do not think I should have

<sup>1</sup> To H. F. Brown. Davos, July 31, 1887.

undertaken it. I have now been working pretty hard for four months at the proofs, and have still one-third of the whole to do. I suppose I must reckon on the whole of August being devoted to it. I do not believe that such a translation is worth all this labour, especially as I hear that the edition is to be restricted to five hundred copies. My chief satisfaction is that I am at least more accurate than Roscoe. To count his bad blunders would be impossible.

‘I think I told you that I have begun some Essays on the Principles of Art and Criticism. These I can push forward when there are no proofs. I have already got four pretty well finished, viz. Realism and Idealism; The Model; Beauty, Composition, Expression, Characterisation; On the Application of Evolutionary Ideas to the Study of Art and Literature. Then there is another on The Validity of Nature-Myth and Allegory, and another on Arnold’s paradox, “Poetry is a Criticism of Life,” ready. I am thinking of a short study on Landscape, and another on Democratic Art, in which I shall try to say my say about the lines for future art-work opened out by Whitman. I am also vaguely planning one on Hybrids, which might, I think, be curious.

‘We had a very violent thunderstorm on Friday evening, the finest I have ever known here. The rain fell in volumes; and suddenly, in the middle of the uproar, a great noise made itself felt—like a dozen express trains tearing through a deep cutting. We could hear some obviously human shrieks also. What they call a *Rüfe* or sudden swelling of the torrent from the Jacobshorn, which comes down above Huldi, the carpenter’s workshop, had taken place. Usually this is a thin thread of water. But now it was bringing down thousands of tons of rock per minute. I went to examine the scene this morning, and saw some really incredibly huge blocks of granite which the miserable little rivulet had brought from above. It only lasted fifteen minutes. But in that time many acres of grass-land were ruined, and several homesteads inundated.

‘I have just been to hear a sermon in the Davos Church. They have a new clergyman, to go to listen to whom is now the fashion among the young men. He preached on the king-



dom of God ; implied that Christ was a man ; said that you could not be sure of Christ's own words from the contradictory statements of the Gospels ; denounced the theory of the Church ; poured contempt upon Bibliolatry. I never heard such a bombshell of Rationalism—very eloquently expressed too. Curiously enough, the Davos peasants are keen on the new theology. I heard of this clergyman by accident at a *Wirthschaft*, where the whole conversation turned upon his definition of the Deity. I used to imagine that the young men at least cared about none of these things. It appears now that they did not care about the humdrum orthodoxy of their previous teachers.'

' On <sup>1</sup> Monday I gave myself a holiday by taking a new walk. It was the ascent of a mountain called "Pischa," 9,300 feet, which rises from the Fluela Thal, S.E., and commands a finer view, in my opinion, than the Schwartzhorn, since by its position the whole Landwasser valley, as far as the Julier and Schyn, is surveyed, together with Prättigau ; and the huge pyramidal peaks of the Silvretta group are seen immediately in front. From this peak we scrambled down very rocky places to the head of the Vereina Thal, where a Club-hut has just been built in a most romantic place—the meeting of four vales, with roaring cataracts pouring down into a tangle of dwarf pine. Then to Klosters—about three and a half hours' descent, rapid walking. The whole expedition had more of the picturesque and romantic than is common in these hills ; and, though long, it was not difficult. I was out twelve hours ; nine hours pretty hard walking, the rest divided between a rest on the peak and a rest in the Club-hut.

' It does me good morally to take a walk of this sort—I mean it keeps my sense of living up ; and I do not think it hurts me physically, though I got a slight chill from being wetted by a storm of rain.

' I have made friends with a guide at Klosters called Guler, whom I like.'

<sup>1</sup> To H. F. Brown, Davos, September 14, 1887.

‘I<sup>1</sup> told you in my last letter that I was thinking of an excursion into the Averserthal. This is what I have done now ; and it has quite repaid me. Without going into details of description I will say that I have never seen anything in the way of high river scenery to equal this. The Averser Rhein beats the Sesia and the Mastalone hollow, and has long odds against the streams of the Dolomites, which I have always thought enchanting. It has a tremendous volume of the purest azure water, which sometimes hides itself in cembra-tufted gorges, sometimes swims through grassy meadows with wide swirling curves that hollow out the turfy margin to their liking, sometimes carves a narrow monumental way through solid marble pure as Parian or Pentelican, sometimes falls thundering in cataracts encircled with a dozen changeful rainbows, sometimes glides deep and solemn in dark pools, which make one dream of death and long to dive in them and find the mystery.

‘It is a long valley—forty kilometres. I had not thought that this Canton held anything so highly poetical. And tourists have not touched it. I slept with my guide in a room which held the Archives of the valley in one chest, and had the Eucharistic vessels of ancient pewter on a window-sill. There was nothing to eat but eggs and bread. This, however, signified little.

‘Well, I will not tell you more of Avers. It is enough to have mentioned the stream, and to that deity I sacrifice.’

[Cellini was finished, and in the interval before it appeared Symonds took a journey to Venice with his daughter Margaret, in the month of October. The immediate success of the ‘Cellini’ greatly pleased him, and he was soon embarked upon the translation of another series of Memoirs, those of Carlo Gozzi. Though he really enjoyed the study of decadent Venetian life, he did not escape the chill of authorship, which he expresses thus :]

1888      ‘Something<sup>2</sup> has happened to me lately, whether temporary or permanent remains to be seen, which has reduced my vitality

<sup>1</sup> To H. F. Brown. Davos, Sept. 22, 1887.

<sup>2</sup> To the same. Davos, Jan. 21, 1888.

and induced a sort of somnolence by no means natural. However, without somnambulising upon paper, the upshot is that I am uneasy on reflecting, in a wakeful interval, how much time has elapsed since I wrote you a letter, and how you may have interpreted my inattention.

‘I am doing no good in my literary work. I believe this is the secret, or a secret, of my state. Gozzi will not do. And yet I do not see my way to getting out of Gozzi. Excellent to read through rapidly for a student of *roba italiana*, his Memoirs are hardly worth translating, and their interest depends upon such trivialities—the decadence of Venetian society in a putrid mass of political corruption, Brummagem French philosophy aped by Italians with no revolutionary force inside them, prostitution, theatrical cabals, vain efforts to rehabilitate Dante in the city of Casanova, Baffo, and the Doge Renier, bad style, bad morals, effeminacy, hypocrisy, sloth, *dappocaggine* of every sort—with an odd unsympathetic bastard between Don Quixote and a pettifogging attorney, a man of cramped genius and of respectable sentiments turned sour, to serve as central figure—all this is so irrelevant to the main current of world-history, so *bizarre*, so involved in masses of petty details which have lost the accent of humanity, that I despair of making anything out of my work. And yet I am engaged.

‘*Basta!* I enjoyed the visits of A. Sidgwick and Dakyns three weeks. But it was a tiring time, from the vast amount of talk. And there is all the tobogganing business afloat now : squabbles, petty arrangements, &c., &c. Every scrap of the small affair comes eventually to this house. Since I began this letter I have had a solemn deputation to attend to from the natives of Clavadel, where we shall run the International Race, intimating that, unless their particular demands are met, they mean to shut the road up; and the race is next Thursday.’

‘Our<sup>1</sup> luck in tobogganing has been indeed great. We arranged to hold the International Race at Clavadel, providing a mile course, and running two heats. This was fixed for

<sup>1</sup> To H. F. Brown. Davos, Jan. 28, 1888.

10 A.M. on the 26th, and thirty-two competitors of all sorts and nations entered. The usual public luncheon for one hundred and twenty people was ordered in the Rathhaus. I saw on the morning of the race by my barometer, and a strange look in the sky, that the weather would change. However, we had it fine up to 1.30, when the race was at last over—fancy how long ! And I was standing all that while upon the snow, helping to record the time, identify the racers, and keep the course clear.

‘Then a furious wind swept down the valley, tearing the snow from the forests and house-roofs, and tossing a tempest of finely powdered snow-sand up into the clear blue sky against the blazing noonday sun—a striking and splendid sight, as the swirl of snow shifted, and took various effects of light.

‘The race was a very good one. An American, called Child, who rides head-foremost on a flat toboggan, came in first, beating two old racers, Freeman and Austin equal, by three seconds, while Minsch, <sup>1</sup> who came on purpose from Montreux, where I have placed him to learn French, ran in fourth at another interval of five seconds. I am always happy when this race and all that belongs to it is well over. On Thursday I did not get home till seven, having started in the morning at nine, and never stopped talking all the time ; and then I had to entertain here until midnight. Such a day.

‘As President of the Club, known alike to English and Swiss, everything falls eventually on my shoulders, and I am held responsible for anything which may go wrong. I have resigned the post, and trust that my resignation will be accepted.

‘But about our luck ; if the weather had changed two hours earlier, the whole thing would have come to grief. And the valley is in such a state now, that no running will be possible for days, weeks perhaps. The higher passes are blocked, Fluela impassable, and those dreadful creatures, “dust-avalanches,” *Staub-lavinen*, playing at will upon the mountains.

‘The University of Oxford has chosen me as one of its

<sup>1</sup> A native of Klosters, in whose career Symonds interested himself. He is now conductor in the postal service.

three delegates to Bologna, for the festival which begins on June 13, to celebrate the eleventh centenary of that University. I doubt whether I shall accept. It is risky to think of anything so late in the summer.'

'It<sup>1</sup> began to snow last Saturday at 2.30 P.M., and it has been snowing almost incessantly since then. Our only safe communication with the rest of the world is by the Prättigau. Avalanches are streaming down both sides of the valley below Frauenkirch. One man was killed on the road near Glaris yesterday; another, whom I know, was blown by the blast of an avalanche from the road near Tschuggen on the Fluela, right across the stream to the other side of the valley, and then buried in the torrent of snow which followed him. It is very difficult to get out of our house, though I have three men always working, cutting us out. And I begin to feel uneasy about the masses of snow upon the Schiahorn right above our heads. If the snow does not stop, I think seriously of migrating to Hotel Buol to-morrow; that house is in a safer place than ours. This state of things does not agree with mental activity. I am stupefied merely by gazing at the perpetual whirl of snow-flakes, the gradual ascent of snow-walls round me, and the recurrent noise of snow descending with a heavy thud from the house-roof.

'I always wanted to see a "great snow" here; and now I have my wish, so I ought not to grumble. There has been nothing like it since I came in 1877.

'I wonder what part Lord Salisbury is playing in the European crisis. The suspense is terrible, something like the expectation of a "Staub-Lavine" from the Schiahorn.'

'... I<sup>2</sup> see that you and I fully agree about Creighton. The book has been one of absorbing interest to me, not only in these last two volumes, but also in the first couple. I think it a really great book, which does honour to the school of English historians. The grasp of the whole field shown in his treatment, his power of turning from a Pope in Rome to the same

<sup>1</sup> To H. F. Brown. Davos, Feb. 9, 1888.

<sup>2</sup> To the same. Davos, Feb. 29, 1888.



Pope in Europe, is very remarkable. And I think that we may in part ascribe his rehabilitation of men like Sixtus IV. and Alexander VI. to his feeling that their personal conduct ought to be reduced to scale with their cosmopolitan importance. Here, however, I should make two observations. One is, that their personal behaviour was decisive in the germination and development of Reforming Teutonic antagonism, and that therefore the main problem of his book becomes more difficult to solve in proportion as he whitewashes the protagonists, the Popes. The second is, that he has hitherto overlooked a large sphere of Pontifical activity: *e.g.* Sixtus IV.'s part in the Spanish treatment of Jews and Moors, and Alexander's part in the formation of what became the Index Expurgatorius, and with it the suppression of free thought in Catholic kingdoms. He alludes to these points, but so faintly that the anomaly of the Papacy, that anomaly which justified the insurgence of Reform and liberal science, and brought about the Catholic Reaction in its historical form, is unexplained.

‘I look forward with much interest to the next portion of his work, when we shall see how he solves the problem of the Reformation after having weakened the old lines of explanation. I doubt not but that he will be able to state the phenomenon by using forces extant in Germany which were independent of Papal scandals.

‘I am very dull, brain-tired, engaged in correspondence of all sorts. An English D.D. writes to consult me about the ways of reconciling Providence and Natural Law. Is not that odd? This is only one among many instances of correspondence which has fallen on me through my article in the July “Fortnightly.”’<sup>1</sup>

[In two phrases of the letters just quoted—‘something has happened to me lately, whether temporary or permanent remains to be seen, which has reduced my vitality and induced a sort of somnolence,’ and ‘I am very brain-tired’—seem, regarded in the light of what I subsequently knew, to be indicative of a gradual diminution of physical force which set

<sup>1</sup> ‘On the Progress of Thought in our own time.’



in now and continued to the end. The spiritual activity never diminished, the intellectual flame burned brighter and brighter, the interest in all the varied relations of friendship and sympathy with human beings grew more vivid and full as the end approached. His published work alone would be sufficient to prove this: 'Essays, Speculative and Suggestive'; 'Michael Angelo'; the elaborate 'Study of Walt Whitman,' into whose short compass he has poured so much of his life, thought, and philosophy. But more than this, certain remarks in letters to his intimate friends seem to show that he was himself conscious of the movement which was taking place. Some time later, it is true, but in the spirit of reflection upon the past, he writes:]

'I hope to be in England about two months. Short time enough, considering all I ought to do—desire to do—in it. With me life burns ever more intense, as my real strength wanes and my days decrease. It seems to me sometimes awful—the pace at which I live in feeling—inversely to the pace at which myself is ebbing to annihilation.

'I shall have a great deal to say to you if only it can be said. I never seem to have lived until quite lately; and just when the times are out of joint for self-externalising life, I seem drawn into it. It is true I go on writing books, and even poems. But literature has long since lost for me reality of interest. One reads certainly, and copious reading fills the vacuum which remains when feeling and sensation are abeyant.'

[The extraordinary snowfall of the winter of 1887-88 fascinated Symonds's imagination. He refers to it again and again in his letters, and he eventually worked the subject out in an Essay on Avalanches, which was published in 'Our Life in the Swiss Highlands,' the joint work of himself and his daughter Margaret, who was so often her father's companion on his journeys, and his helper in his studies. The spring outing to Venice led them over several of the passes, and allowed Symonds to see much that had taken place during this memorable winter.]

‘Madge’<sup>1</sup> and I settled finally to leave Davos alone. We had a tremendous journey over Julier and Maloja, but arrived here safely yesterday. I telegraphed to you, but was so stupid that I did not also write. I hope, however, that this will arrive before we do.

‘I wish I could tell you something of our journey. It was in many respects very impressive. The descent from the top of the Julier to Silvaplana in perfect darkness and a blinding snowstorm, with whirling drift and the road buried, was particularly so. The postillion at one point said: “We must now trust to the horse, and if he does not find the road, *es ist mit uns um*—it is over with us.” The horse did find the way, pausing, feeling each step with his hoof, putting his nose down to smell, sometimes hardly stirring from the spot, and sometimes breaking into a trot for a few minutes. His bells were taken off for fear of avalanches. The snow is so deep up there that you can touch the telegraph wires with your fingers. They made the most hideous shrieks in the wind close to our ears, like the voices of Banshees and wailing women, with a curse in them.

‘We are resting here to-day. This place, which I always admire, looks very beautiful in the stormy April sunlight.’

‘I<sup>2</sup> do not want to speak about my own ‘psychological circumstances, more than, in a parenthesis, to observe that life at Davos has become for me a permanent sort of tunnel. When friends come there, as A. and G. did last Christmas, I do not think they notice this, because they polarise and externalise me by their own being. But when friends are not there, I live in the worst sort of tunnel I know, which is the burrowed gallery in the middle of a marble-hard avalanche, fifty feet beneath the frozen air of Alpine winter in a stony ravine.

‘Well, I return from this parenthesis to your letter of April 8. What you proceed to say there is very deeply interesting, and I have been thinking about it all along. I am sure that I can contribute nothing to the solution, feeling

<sup>1</sup> To H. F. Brown. Chiavenna, April 7, 1888.

<sup>2</sup> To Henry Sidgwick. Venice, 560 Zattere, May 11, 1888. \*

confident that you have exhausted every *pro* and *con* of the problem as it appears to you. But, frankly, it does not appear to my mind as a problem. The object is to arrive at truth, if that can be arrived at; at any rate to search after it. A negative result may be discouraging and disappointing, though I for one do not find it so. I am so sure that sooner or later morality must be based upon analysis of the growth to-us-ward of human opinions and institutions, must enter the sphere of evolutionary philosophy and discover principles *a posteriori*, that it seems to me a pity for a thinker of authority not to accept and proclaim this.

‘But here, probably, we come to a radical difference of opinion, as I think we did about a year ago, when I contended that the immortality of the soul was not a necessary postulate for moral science, even though in course of time we should obtain the certainty of this, and ethics gain the force which comes from the conception. “*Magna est veritas, et prævalebunt.*” Surely the truth at present is, that while the moral law is a fact persistent under all its human variations, we cannot account for the fact any more than we can account for our existence. If we do not know why we are, how can we expect to know why we differentiate our behaviour as right and wrong? All we ought to expect is that we should learn how we exist and how we differentiate.

‘I have been staying during the last five weeks with Madge at Venice, in an apartment of my friend H. F. Brown’s house, which I have taken for some years. It is a pleasant change from the terribly severe winter in Graubünden, when we were literally drowned in snow. I hope to be able ere long to give an extended account of this great snow, and of the play of the avalanches, which exceeds anything I had imagined. I kept well through the winter, and took many driving journeys, in order to see those dreary wildernesses and ruins caused by nature in her wildest, cruellest moods. Now, though I enjoy the colour and the vault of heaven above these waters, I am not good for much in health.’

[That Symonds and his daughter enjoyed Venice and the

expeditions to Asolo, Marostica, the Euganean hills, which they made during the remarkably fine months of April and May, seems clear from such phrases as these, which occur in his correspondence :]

‘I do not know whether it can be good to be mentally and morally starved. But I do know that, if people who are worth anything have been starved so, their sudden invitation to a full, refined, passionate and sympathetic banquet of the most varied delights, exercises a very peculiar influence.

‘We are neither of us apt to take things elegiacally, or to ignore the substantial advantages of any situation in which we find ourselves. The extraordinary cleanliness and comfort of our little house, the splendid air and water, the resuscitated energy communicated by the climate—weigh with us, and are appreciated ; but we know that we want something else, something which we had at Venice.’

‘I have been doing the most incongruous of things since I arrived here [Davos, June 13, 1888] last Friday. After settling my affairs, which you know takes some time after a nine weeks’ absence, I have been writing the history of last winter’s avalanches.

‘I can tell you that this is precious difficult to do. You have to paint with a palette on which there are no colours—pure *grisaille*—absolute monotony. And yet I think I have succeeded ; and therefore I suppose I shall not get my essay printed.

‘It is funny, coming back from that variegated life in Venice into the fresh beauty of the Alps—and they are quite coquettishly attired this early summer ; it is funny that a man should sit down and sweat his brains out over a description of the grim ascetic winter, which is past. I think this shows—and perhaps you will agree with me—that, in the long run, we really love the sternest things in life best. They seem to cling to us, and wrap us round, and haunt us. The rest we take and leave, as recreation prompts. Facile ephemeral pleasures—deep penetrating sadnesses.

‘I am not reconciled yet to Veltliner Wein. I fear that the various facile vintages, Verona, Valpolicella, Venosa—these many V’s are good—have seduced me. Yet there is a V in the Valtellina, and a V in Venice, which is innocent of vintages. So perhaps I shall become reconciled to my Veltliner after all.

‘But I have played on the letter V enough, and I ask you to notice that I am now using the Fabbriano paper (Campo S. Luca) which you recommended. I like it greatly, and shall see to getting a supply here. Eighty of these pages have gone into the article upon the avalanches. Good gracious, what a subject! Yet I flatter myself that I am about the first to polish that rough diamond.’

[The summer of 1888 proved excessively wet, owing, no doubt, to the previous heavy snowfall. The effect on Symonds was decidedly bad; it kept him indoors employed on work, and induced an attack of that dipsychia which resulted as a reaction from intellectual labour.]

‘I hoped to spend this morning (Sept. 25) on the Schwartzhorn. It has turned out one of the worst days of all this dismal summer. So I am here at Am Hof, and have been making acquaintance with a young Russian, instead of sweeping the horizons of the Alps.

‘I finished my Essay on Elizabethan and Victorian Poetry. What it will be like, under the conditions of its composition, Heaven only knows.

‘One brain is more than one man ought to have to put up with. But a couple of brains, pulling in different directions, such as I possess at present, is distracting.’

‘I am afraid [October 2] I must have disgusted you with the flippancy of my last letters. The fact is, I was falling ill. The usual thing happened. 1. Too much writing for a long space of time—Cellini, the Essays, Gozzi, the Essay on Victorian Poetry. 2. Too much sitting up and talking with Jowett and you; I cannot fill my friends’ Leyden jars, if I do so, as you say, without a great expenditure. 3. A super-



excitability of emotions, a physical restlessness, attaching itself to this or that object, as a first result of failing energy.'

'I have been unfortunate this summer. The weather prevented me from getting proper air and exercise. If I could have taken those mountain walks with Guler I had planned, to explore the Silvretta glacier and the valleys of the upper Vorarlberg, I should have kept my health.

'The weather is terribly against me. It storms and rains perpetually, so that I cannot get out enough, and always run a risk when I do so.'

'I have chosen the strongest hour of my day to write this, and here is the result. Go some times on credit with me. I must emerge. But it is difficult. I cannot put myself just now into the C major key of this life, in which you are living. It is serious, this physical, mental, spiritual struggle of the nervously strong man at odds with malady. People think—I dare say you think—that I yield too easily to passing illness, and flit away hypochondriacally from Venice or from London. No, no, no.'

'I must<sup>1</sup> write to you one line to-night to send you my wishes for Christmas. Something this year makes me think of the old years in our childhood, when we used to go with Sophie into Leigh Woods and bring back loads of ivy for wreaths. It is so different here. My little Katherine collects frozen moss in small quantities from the roots of trees where the snow is not too deep—to make a church decoration.

'At any rate, I am thinking of you now. And I want to thank you for the book of Tom's life, which found me in Venice. I read the biography with very great interest, and it left upon my mind the sense of having been extremely well done—as well as pains, and love, and sympathy with his high aims and noble character, could do it. Yet the man is not there. He cannot be there. Nothing which we can write about anybody is worth much. It is certainly worth no more than a copperplate engraving from the live man's face we knew—

<sup>1</sup> To his sister Charlotte. Davos, December 20, 1888,



and that is better than a staring photograph. (That is not true. One of the things that I love best here is Tom's face in the large photograph you gave us. I often go to this face in my troubles.)

'The older I get, and the more I learn to know folk, the more I feel it is not what a man thinks about the universe, and politics and art and social questions, and all the rest of such matters, which signifies—but what we are, personally are; that is the great fact. And that is always incommunicable. That is how we touch the people whom we mould in life unto our likeness. And that, the real essential man, lives onward in a way which no species of photogravure or copperplate engraving in words will manifest.

'What was Christ, as an individuality, I wonder? We know well what has been made of His reported words, and of the loving portraits drawn by His disciples.

'I have been very ill since I came back from Venice at the end of November. If you had been here, I should have liked to talk to you about my state of health. It is a case of overwrought nerves and painful disturbance of the ordinary thought-functions. I do not think it can be written about with any profit. And I do not expect much from doctoring; more from self-discipline. Good-night, dearest sister.—Ever yours.

'*P.S.*—In this letter I want to add a word of Christmas greetings to my dear Auntie. I am thinking to-night of our old Clifton home. I see and feel and even smell the winter there—and am so far away from England. Give her my best love, and tell her that the thought of England and the past is always for me connected with a thousand memories of her. I hope for her many years of happy life.'

'I must<sup>1</sup> write, lest you should think I am more actually 1889 dead than I really am. Time has become for me a category of no value whatsoever. I gain in this life a relative conception of life in the eternities. I don't want to discourse. So I will bind myself down to facts.

<sup>1</sup> To H. F. Brown. Davos, Feb. 16, 1889.

‘We had a long visit from Cadogan, which was in all ways pleasant. He is a good fellow, enjoyed every minute of his time here, made us feel that he did so, which is a great thing in guests, and let me learn him very intimately.’

‘I have been writing, with immense toil and grief, four essays upon Style. I don’t know what devil has got possession of my own style and dried its wells up.’

‘Just now I am negotiating the transfer of a gymnasium, which I have helped to build here, into the hands of the Commune. I have offered the sum of 10,000 francs, as a free gift, in order to effect the consolidation of the debts and other financial interests involved. This keeps me up to the chin in small transactions, and I discover how difficult it is to spend money generously and yet effectively. That I knew before. But I did not anticipate quite the same rebuffs as I am experiencing now. Yet I hope to bring affairs to a right conclusion. Only I never got rid of 400*l.* with more diplomacy and more management than I am doing now. I doubt whether anybody ever flung so much money away, so virtuously, and so irksomely. All this makes me appreciate the grit and pride of my beloved Graubündeners. I love this people for the obstacles they put before me; and I hope they will appreciate what I am doing, when they fully comprehend my scope. These are the main facts of the moment.’

‘There are other things beside what I have written of—longings, experiences, sympathies with my growing children, anxieties about Miss North, readings in books, correspondences with the four quarters of the globe. But the whole is got mixed up for me and blurred with Maya. I have not recovered, and perhaps shall never recover, from four months ago.—Yours ever, *so wie so.*’

[As a relief and a change, Symonds took a sledging drive with his daughter Margaret, which he enjoyed, though his constitution showed less elasticity for recovery than was usual with him.]

‘Madge<sup>1</sup> and I had a good time in the Vorder Rheinthal

<sup>1</sup> To H. F. Brown, March 3, 1889.

We drove about incessantly in sledges for seven days. Both came back to Davos, and had severe colds on our arrival. I am still sunk below the surface of vitality in a deep sea of cold.

‘But, such is the oddness of man’s nature, I have chosen this particular moment to begin a new literary work of the utmost importance—my “Autobiography”—and at the same time I am overwhelmed with Gozzi proofs, which keep pouring in by every post, so that I have to spend at least four hours a day upon them, and look forward to a speedy completion of the printing. I shall be glad when it is done. My heart was never in that subject. And yet I think it is a workmanly performance. The book will be about eight hundred pages, of which two hundred pages are original essays, the rest translation of Gozzi’s “Memoirs.”

‘God bless you, dear friend. Looking to times less dark and less confused than these, which overwhelm me with innumerable cares and miseries of health, I am your ever loving.

‘P.S.—I have not yet persuaded the *Gemeinde* to accept my 10,000 francs.’

‘Gozzi<sup>1</sup> has been literally pouring. Torrents of proofs come daily. I worked literally ten hours at them yesterday, and have just had another bout of three hours this morning. The result is that the book is nearly all in print. There only remain some pages of my continuation of the life and an essay on Longhi to complete it. The whole will be longer, I think, than Cellini.

‘I have also had a good deal of business about my donation to the Commune. At last I believe that I shall force my 400*l.* down their throat, and put them thereby into the position of buying an excellent gymnasium, which cost over 1,000*l.* to build, for the comparatively small outlay of 160*l.*

‘I cannot quite understand, and am rather mortified by, their reluctance to accept my offer. My object was to secure

<sup>1</sup> To H. F. Brown. Davos, March 24, 1889.

the gymnasium for the public, and at the same time to retain for the *Turnverein* their right of using it, while I relieved the latter of a serious debt. Their debt amounts to 14,000 francs. I offer 10,000, on condition the *Gemeinde* discharges the balance of 4,000, by which means the building becomes the property of the *Gemeinde*, with rights of use reserved for the *Verein*.

‘There was a three hours’ meeting at the Rathhaus yesterday about it; and now a plan, arranged between the members of the Council of the Commune, the managers of the *Verein*, and myself, will be submitted to the *Landsgemeinde*, or general assembly of the burghers of Davos.

‘In the interval of other things, I have written a good deal of Autobiography. I should like to talk to you about my plan, and I will certainly bring the work to Venice if I come.

‘I am [April 3] writing away at my Autobiography, and have reached the age of thirteen. It is interesting work, but I see that it tends *ad infinitum*, and that it will be hardly fit to publish.

‘On the eve of departing [April 10] from Davos, if spring storms permit, across the dreary and now dilapidated Fluela snow-road, my thoughts turn to you.

‘All this winter my health has been very queer. It is one of the reasons why I have corresponded with you infrequently and reticently. And just now I feel upon the brink of an absolute collapse. A diurnal drive of from eight to twelve hours in fine scenery ought to do me good.

‘The Autobiography has been going on. I have written a decent octavo volume, and got down to my nineteenth year, rather beyond it. According to my conception of such a work, the years of growth are the most important, and need the most elaborate analysis. But if I do not fling the whole thing aside, I see my opportunity for “panning out” considerably *de omnibus rebus* in the future. It is a fascinating canvas, this of a *Lebensschilderung*, for a man who has been hitherto so reticent in writing, and who is so naturally egotistical and personal as I am. Heaven knows what will come of it, and what will be done with it.’

[Symonds and his wife started for Venice on April 12, and with this journey he resumed his habit of keeping a full and elaborate diary, a habit which had been partially abandoned under the pressure of much writing at Davos, more especially of the Autobiography. This new Diary differs greatly in quality from the earlier journals. It is a minute record, not of emotions, not of spiritual moods, but of external facts. We have already seen how interest in the concrete had gradually assumed the place in Symonds's mind once occupied by speculations in the abstract; and that important change of psychical attitude reveals itself now in the new Diary, in its style, for which 'Essays, Speculative and Suggestive,' as well as the 'Autobiography,' had been preparing the way. The Diary opens with a dangerous adventure on the Fluela Pass:]

*April 12, 1889.*—After some days of indecision, Catherine and I left Davos this morning for Sūs by the Fluela. It was misty, yet I thought with the promise of a fine day in it. A large post and four passengers, and six luggage sledges, with only four drivers to all the ten horses. We were in the conductor's sledge. Up to the Hospiz things went well, and the heat was absolutely awful. It burned more than I ever felt it burn, except upon the *névé* of a glacier in midsummer. A splendid liquid sky, full of the spring, seeming to portend storm. The road to Sūs combines all the dangers of an Alpine road—avalanches, upsettings, falling stones; and they were all imminent to-day. When the first four sledges plunged into the great gallery I felt comparatively safe, but the rest did not arrive. After about ten minutes a fifth horse came plunging down the dark passage over the ice, with a pack-sledge and no driver. When he reached our train, he kept whinnying, neighing, and looking back as though to tell us that something had happened. We waited another five minutes, and still the rest did not arrive. The conductor had sent the chief postillion back. He could not leave the five horses alone in the tunnel—yet he was now anxious. Accordingly, I proposed to run back and see what had happened. The tunnel was pitch dark and as slippery as glass. It took me



some time to slip along with my *gouties* on.<sup>1</sup> When I emerged into the blaze of sunlight and snow, I saw nothing at first; then met Herr Lendi of Davos Dörfli walking to me. One of the sledges (with a driver) had been upset. The two passengers, a man and woman, and the postillion, had all been flung over a wall on to snow and rocks, and had fallen and rolled about fifty feet down the steep place. The woman was badly cut about the head; the young man, a Swiss, had sprained his hand; the postillion was all right.

‘Fortunately,’ added Lendi, ‘the horses and sledges remained above the wall, else they would all have been smashed together.’ I saw the girl, dazed and faint, and the place where she had fallen; then ran back to tell the conductor. But it was bad going in that tunnel with my gutta-percha shoes, and soon I heard the rest of the sledges come thundering into the pitch dark passage. I tried to keep close to a wall, and in moving shufflingly onward as fast as I could go, fell once heavily upon the rock and ice, bruising my right arm and loins. I did not think much of it at the time, being eager to get to my own sledge before the rest of the train arrived.

I ought to mention the curious optical phenomenon in this black gallery—black because fallen avalanches had stuffed up all its apertures with snow. On entering it, with eyes dazzled by the brilliance of the outer day, any object which caught a reflex of light from behind looked as green as emerald or sun-illuminated lake-water. In the middle there was no colour, nothing but night. Toward the end, when light again caught icicles and snow-heaps from the furthestmost opening, these points shone bright crimson, as though a score of red Bengal lights had been lighted far ahead.

We reached Sûs without further accidents. There, while I was talking to Herr Patt, I found that I had lost a ring from my watch-chain, to which was hung these objects—1, funeral gold ring of John Symonds, my great-grandfather; 2, alliance ring of my great-grandfather and great-grandmother Sykes, two clasped hands opening, one heart inside; 3, a ring belonging

<sup>1</sup> ‘Gouties’ are felt and gutta-percha shoes, much worn at Davos and in the Engadine.



to Admiral Sykes, with the name of his friend Captain Gathorne; 4, my father's guard-ring; 5, my seal ring of bloodstone engraved with the crests of Symonds and Sykes; 6, my gondolier's ring engraved with the arms of Symonds; 7, a Napoleon 'Rép. Fr.' 1848; 8, a cow-bell given me by Patt.

Drove up Engadine in diligence to Samaden. Reached it at 7.

*April 13.*—Up at 4. On at 4.50 in diligence to Silvaplana. There changed to sledges, in which we drove over Maloja to the wood beyond Casaccia. Then changed to diligence again, and reached Chiavenna at noon. A glorious spring day, very cold at first, so that beards and faces, &c., were frosted over. But the sun was glorious, and the mountains shone like crystals. Piz Badile especially beautiful. Picked flowers with C——.

*April 19.*—A restless night. Resolve to stay this day in Chiavenna and keep quiet. Went with C—— to look at the old Salis house. The great hall dignified in French style. Little French oil panels let into some of the rooms. Extremely picturesque views from the garden fruit trees, brown hedges, and a church tower rising in front of dazzling white hills with peaks and broken crests.

It is the purest, loveliest spring weather. The spires and pinnacles of the mountains, which stand about Chiavenna, shoot into liquid blue air, softer and more luminous, less hard, than the skies of our high Alps. They are still powdered with fresh fallen snow on their rocky ledges and upper line of forest, solid at their tops and in their ravines with the snow of winter. Fleecy white clouds curl about them, and travel slowly, like wandering flakes of swan's down, across the open spaces. These clouds will gather volume after mid-day, and toward evening will roll upon the ridges of the hills in masses, threatening thunder, or with flying tresses of rain-coloured storm, swept out behind their hurrying squadrons. The commotion of the spring is in heaven and earth, a restlessness like the approach of some great delivering passion. The enormous granite boulders, which rise up in front of this Hotel Conradi, half in sun and half in shadow, glow duskily like

deep red purple velvet. Here and there they glisten with the drip of trickling streams, and everywhere they are plumed with young trees putting forth their foliage. When you approach them nearer, you find that the darkest, gloomiest rocks are tufted over with crimson and magenta primulas, fragile blossoms on slender stems, starting from cushions of green viscous leaves. These flowers and the rich red heath, with its black eyes, shine like jewels upon that mossy purple background.

It is Palm Sunday, and a procession has just passed across the square from the cathedral under the dreary ruined palace of De Salis. First went women and children, in their many-coloured shawls and petticoats and kerchiefs, mixed with men in black cloaks. Then came a *Confraternità* in white and blue; then another in white and red; then a third in white and lilac; then the deacons, acolytes, and priests in variegated dalmatics and copes, and bright crimson tippets. Great banners with sacred pictures waved at intervals, breaking the long line of steady-moving figures. But the most beautiful detail of the procession is, that everybody held a branch of olive—the children tiny sprigs, the elderly men great stems and boughs, which glinted in the flooding sunlight, each glossy spikelet of the foliage catching an ephemeral spark of brightness. The train crossed from the cathedral, and disappeared into the darkness of the street beyond.

There are two trees in the garden here, one is a *Pyrus Japonica* in full bloom, a standard, about twelve feet high, which has far more of clustered red flowers upon its stout stems and slender branches than of delicate green leaves. If you stand under it, and look up into the clear flat blue of the sky above, and watch the bees at work among the petals, you feel the very wealth and perfectness of colour—pure colour, bathed in light, satisfying the soul by simple plenitude and jocund beauty. What a Japanese plant it is, and how it justifies the realism of Japanese decorative art! You can scarcely note a trace of shading. The masses of scarlet are defined against the mass of blue by outline felt in the colour rather than enforced by contrast. The other tree is a large

cherry, only just coming into bloom ; the bright clumps of buds and half-formed blossoms ready to expand into a cloud of silvery whiteness ; the unfolding leaves, still brown and golden, only here and there half-fledged. These trees taught me much about myself. As I looked at them with peaceful pleasure, I felt that my incessant brain-work and amusements at Davos are in a true sense occasioned by the total lack there of free sensuous beauty and delight inflowing from the outer world. Most of us who are not born mountaineers have been bred to the enjoyment of such things as the pyrus and the cherry symbolise. Without perhaps being aware of it, they are driven too much in upon themselves by the monotony of snow through seven months of winter, and the austerity of that brief summer of the mountains. The tension becomes at last too great. They react against it by debauches of brain-work, stimulation, company.

Going to bed to-night, and crossing the open gallery which gives upon the garden, I say to myself, 'How noble is this Chiavenna landscape ! How grandly do the mountains soar above the city ! How beautiful is all that detail on the opposite hillside.' It is true, indeed, that Chiavenna, under the naked light of a full moon, is superhumanly romantic.

[How the rest of the journey was accomplished may be gathered from the following letter to Mr. Gosse :]

'I have<sup>1</sup> got so far on a long driving journey from Davos to Venice, having traversed the Engadine and the Valtellina, and the Val Camonica and the Lago d'Iseo, in seven days of snow and sunshine and rain.

'Your book on "Eighteenth Century Literature" has been my companion. I always take a book or two to feed upon slowly during these journeys ; and I find that I never enter so thoroughly into the spirit of an author as when I do so. The matter of the book detaches itself in quite a peculiar way against the background of avalanches, wayside hostelries, and postillions, with whom one drinks litres of red wine in

<sup>1</sup> To Edmund Gosse. Brescia, April 19, 1889.

sundry chimney-corners. This being the case, I reserve for my wallet a couple of books which I desire to study.

‘I must write to you my gratitude for the good company during these laborious and eminently picturesque days which you have unconsciously given me. I like your book greatly, and have learned from it very much indeed. It seems to me most admirable in its analytical power—the precision and the justice and the novelty of critical observation applied to the problem of unravelling what looks, to less accurate and learned students of the epoch than you are, like a confused skein. In your preface you apologise for the abundance of dates. I bless you for your copious use of them. Dates, in so intricate a matter of inquiry, are like the kilometre stones upon the long and perplexed roads I have been travelling. They are the final measures for sites and fountain-heads, for paths of origin and paths of divergence. With some of your unorthodox points of view I warmly sympathise, especially in your bold thrusting of Addison back into the second rank, and your no less audacious but quite genial recognition of Goldsmith as a reversion to previous ideals.

‘I wish I had enjoyed the privilege of reading this book before I wrote an article upon Elizabethan and Victorian Poetry for the “Fortnightly.” It would have enabled me, under your auspices, and with reference to your work, to have brought out less crudely the point of neo-Elizabethanism in our century. By the way, when you spoke of Pepys, I think you might have said a word about Roger North. I regard his “Lives of the Norths” and his own Autobiography as remarkable essays in the composition of memoirs. Jowett used to tell me, twenty years ago, that, next to Boswell, Roger North was the best biographer in English. Exaggerated, certainly, but the man has some right to “a niche.” Thank you again. I am so sleepy and so shaken with posting that I must say good-night.’

After Symonds’s return to Davos from Venice, the letters do not indicate any alleviation of that mental trouble which he did not himself understand, but which was, in all likelihood,

due to the gradual diminution of physical force and the concentration of vitality in the strongest part of the man, his brain. The outward conditions of Davos life remained as they were; Symonds applied himself to fresh literary work; he still enjoyed his life among the people of his Canton, he was still able to take journeys to England. But, as he wrote to Mrs. Ross on November 26, 1889:—‘In some strange way, “J’ai perdu ma force et ma vie”; I wonder whether they will ever come back again.’

[That Symonds still loved, and loved increasingly, the country in which he had made his home, is clear from the following passage, also addressed to Mrs. Ross:

‘Many as are the drawbacks of spending one’s life at Davos, it has, æsthetically and sensually, the greatest pleasures which an epicure can hope for.

‘All the Apennines, from Consuma to La Vernia, through Rieti, Aquila, Sulmona, Tivoli, have not a single line of beauty in them equal to what lies about us everywhere in this region. The beauty here, of line and profile, is so overwhelmingly rich, that artists cannot deal with it. I understand their seeking after poorer districts, where “bits” make a distinct pictorial effect, and where atmospheric influences and varieties of vegetation suggest subjects. But here we have the greatest beauty, that which defies art. The only supreme beauty in nature which art can grapple with is the human nude.’

That he still enjoyed the life of the place is also clear, whether he was making expeditions to visit friends in out-of-the-way valleys, or assisting at those gymnastic meetings for which the Swiss are celebrated.

‘I went off last Monday for an escapade to Ems, in order to be present at the wedding of my friend, Franz Willy. It lasted from 8.30 A.M. until 2.30 A.M. Tuesday and Wednesday mornings. I at least went to bed at 2.30. The other guests did not go to bed at all. The whole affair, though exceedingly fatiguing, was interesting and amusing. It will help to form a “page of my life.”’



‘On Thursday I was driven to Thusis, where I met a friend, called Anton Juon, who took me to his home in Reuschen, on the hills above Andeer. There I stayed, in one of the most perfect peasant houses I have seen, until this morning, when he and his handsome brother came up with me to Davos. They are staying here now ; and I am to give a banquet to the *Turnverein* to-morrow evening in one of the *Wirthschaften* here. So you see I have been going it.

It was very cold on this journey, and I am rather the worse for wear in my breathing apparatus. But I shall try to hold out until to-morrow night is over.

‘The Via Mala at 5 A.M. to-day was ghostly-glorious. The undefined light of approaching dawn dilated all its heights and depths ; and a waning moon hung far away to westward in a melancholy space of sky between the crags. I have been living for these five days with Romansch-speaking folk, which has added to the usual nervous tension of conversing with natives. But it has been a good time on the whole—yet a cold time—so cold that I could not wash except at the pump. Every fluid in my bedroom froze—down to a mixture of quinine and sulphuric acid.

‘If you are still ill, this will read to you like madness ; and it was somewhat mad of me to take a frolic which made such constant demands upon my nervous force.’

‘We reached Davos last Friday [June 11, 1889], after four pretty hard days from Schio. I had business here all Saturday. On Sunday, Chr. Buol drove me down to Thusis, in company with twenty-five of the Davos gymnasts, who went with music and banners in two five-horse brakes. It was a merry party.

‘The *Turnfest* at Thusis on Monday was exceedingly pretty—on a long level upraised grassy terrace, with that fine theatre of valley and wood and precipice. There were some 130 competitors, many of them extremely fine men.

‘It is time to close this letter, for the night is far advanced, and I am very tired. That *Turnfest* on the top of a long journey was pretty steep upon my strength. I stood about



upon the ground yesterday from 7 A.M. till 8 P.M., and then sat in company till 1 A.M., and these excellent Swiss lads are noisy.'

And with the plastic sense, the feeling for sculpturesque beauty thus stimulated, he writes, *à propos* of a subsequent gymnastic tournament, to Lord Ronald Gower: 'If Michael Angelo could have learned anything about muscles and postures, he might have picked up a crumb at this feast.'

Of his English journeys he says: 'Contact with England only intensifies the feeling for what has subtly made itself the home of my predilection.' That is true, certainly, of his affection for Davos. But there was another side of him which missed the contact with the larger world, and that side speaks out in the following close of an address which was read for him at Toynbee Hall in April 1890:

'At the end of my lecture I should like to say a few words to you from myself. I sympathise deeply with your work at Toynbee Hall. I congratulate you heartily on the success you have achieved. Your association for objects of study, of athletic exercise, of foreign travel, seems to me one of the best and brightest signs of our complex modern civilisation. It is worthy of the noble man whose name you bear, and whom it was my privilege in former days to know. It only grieves me that I cannot meet you face to face, to address you with my own voice, and take part occasionally in your smoking conferences. I utter the last regret because I am a devotee of the pipe. I have always found it conducive to good fellowship and sober thinking, when friends meet for the discussion of such exciting topics as political and social problems. It has been my fate for the last twelve years to be almost wholly isolated in this distant Alpine valley, where I am now writing. I have done my best to maintain intellectual activity by historical studies, by literary work, and miscellaneous reading. But I sorely miss the clash of mind with equal mind, the vitalising and exhilarating contact of men engaged in the same pursuits as myself. It seems to me that a man must inevitably rust among these silent snows and sombre pine-woods. It seems impossible that I should not have lost touch with young men like you, who are moving in the main currents of the

great world. Pardon me, then, if what I have written to be read to you smacks of antiquity and obsolete tradition on the one hand, or of a solitary's vain imaginings on the other. Accept the wish to serve and converse with you for the deed. Believe that, according to my poor capacity, I will respond to calls you make for dissertations like the one I send you now. From the mountains of the Grisons I stretch forth my hand to you in London.'

But deep down, at the very root of himself, he was not well; the vital energy was running low.]

'In<sup>1</sup> this day and yesterday, I have taken a fast grip upon my work—the remodelling of those "Essays, Speculative and Suggestive." But I do my task with reluctance. I hate the uncertainties of these critical determinations. They are good enough to talk out, with a pipe or a cigar, among acquaintances. But to write and print them?

"Grün ist der Baum des Lebens, grau ist alle Theorie." That will be a motto for my next book. The uncertainties of even occasional contacts with human beings seem to me now so far more pregnant and more real than what we can achieve with thought. At my age, this is like standing on one's head; for I ought to have got to the point when ideas are paramount, and I have only just arrived at the point where things of life and sense appear at all significant. It has therefore been for me troublesome to finger again the old Gordian knot of what we mean by criticism, and whether there is any substratum for its exercise.

'I know your woods and vales and meadows on the slope at Serravalle—a gracious landscape, a sweet place to breathe again in. I thought it, last spring, one of the most attractive spots I had ever visited—if the Bersaglieri bugles had not rung so shrilly there at night.'

1890

[In the early days of 1890 Symonds suffered from a severe attack of influenza, which contributed to lower his physical forces. 'What I resent most,' he says, 'is that I cannot

<sup>1</sup> To H. F. Brown. Davos, June 20, 1889.

write—literature, I mean—and I cannot follow a difficult book. I tried Pater's "Appreciations" to-day, and found myself wandering about among the "precious" sentences, just as though I had lost myself in a sugar-cane plantation.' Nor did a spring visit to Venice do much to restore his health. From his room on the Zattere he writes to Mr. Gosse:]

'I cannot<sup>1</sup> describe the curious mosaic of this Venetian existence. I write the "pages of my life" in a diary; but I do not suppose they will see the light. It is a jumble of hours and hours by day upon the lagoons, hours and hours by night in places of the most varied description. Work does not enter into the scheme, and "das was uns alle bändigt, das Gemeine," is almost wholly excluded.

'... I do not know whether I do not envy you. I have never had the sobering influences of routine. The last twelve years of Swiss-Italian life, most necessary to my physical health, have detached me from ambition, society, everything that is not a mode of my self-effectuation, subordinate to the prime duties and engagements of life. . . .'

'I felt<sup>2</sup> at Venice, and I feel here, very deeply the injustice of the world—that a man like myself, who has no merits to distinguish him from the rest, should be, through luck of birth and money merely, enabled to play upon the lyre of life so largely to his satisfaction—sea, city, islands, pictures, palaces, there; here, mountains, fine air, forests, homely houses, flowers—and in both situations, intellectual enjoyment, responsive human beings, energies of heart and head.

'Should you care to have a copy of two volumes of "Essays, Speculative and Suggestive" by me, which are announced? Essays, I find, are rather poor stuff; twice removed from talk in energy, and thrice from life in substance. But I should be glad to give you anything I do, which you think worthy of acceptance.'

<sup>1</sup> To Edmund Gosse. 560 Zattere, Venice, May 12, 1890.

<sup>2</sup> To the same. Davos, June 13, 1890.

[How much he was interested in these Essays, appears from the following letter :]

‘I<sup>1</sup> envy you that storm in the Piave valley. Those are the kind of things which do the soul good—in some obscure way; like most of the disturbances of nature, external or internal. It is also very pleasant to hear that you are reading my book, and that you find it so far stimulating. I am interested in this book more than I have been in any other; not in its success, that must take care of itself, and really does not matter, but in what people think of it, for I put a great deal of myself into it, and what they think of it is what they think of me, the man here. So I hope you will some time tell me where you find me “flinging out” in a way you do not like. I thought I had only indulged in one fling—in a passage on the *bourgeois* in the essay on Democratic Art. But it seems I must have already done so in the first four essays. This, for me, is a very important point, and I want much to be enlightened on the subject. For my aim at present in writing is not to “fling out,” except when the occasion makes it necessary. And yet I know that, living so much alone, I am not always in proper *rapport* to my audience, and probably I take many things for accepted truths which may appear to others sallies of my own humour. So tell me, if you will do me this service, where you felt the personal kick-out or the “privy nip.” It is of the utmost value to me to know.

‘I hope you will not think I am boring you for mere opinions, which I shall afterwards discuss with you. That I promise not to do; it is not what I am after. But I do want to see with your eyes, and feel with your senses, what impression my way of obtruding myself has made. The mere indication of pages where the “flinging out” occurs, will suffice for my intelligence. The rest must be left to my judgment, the lesson to my capacity for profiting by it.’

[And later still, on July 29, he continues :]

‘You make me feel that the long discipline I gave myself

<sup>1</sup> To H. F. Brown. Davos, July 15, 1890.

in preparing that book—altering my nature, correcting my proclivities, working toward a conscious aim—has not been thrown away. For I have lived a strange life in many ways of late ; and all the time I have striven to gain preciser views and methods of expression—I have wanted to be as sincere in sense, and in thought and sympathies, and in the training of the intellectual moral part of me, as I could hope to be. I thank you very gratefully for all you write. It makes me feel that I have rather grown than lost in the process of self-effectuation, which is the only business of an individuality.

‘Who can judge for himself? We must see ourselves in the mirror of others. Not in the mirror of the reviews. They have their place in forming the jury which condemns or acquits the inner man. But they do not enable one so narrowly to test the decline or the growth in himself, as what a friend who knows and loves him says.

‘Henry Sidgwick here has helped me in the same way, or a similar. These Essays have suggested for twelve days constantly recurring conversations, and have set speculation on the wing. They would not have done so with him, had they not had stuff. And do you know, I was beginning to fear I had no stuff left in me? So through my friends I feel that, if I am allowed some years of energy, I may go on to new things with freshly trained faculties. Thank you, and God bless you.’

[The reception accorded in the press to these volumes, by which, as we have seen, Symonds set great store, hurt him more than he was ever hurt before or after. He looked upon the book as in some ways a new departure in his literary career, and he felt that in it he had given more of himself to the public than in any previous work except ‘*Animi Figura*.’ To H. F. Brown he writes, in September, 1890 :]

‘I have been in bed since Thursday with continuous fever. I only get an hour or two in the morning when I can use my head.

‘The review of my Essays in the *Athenæum*, last number, please read if you can. This is the kind of review which

makes one wish to publish nothing again, which blights any pleasure one may have had in one's work, and which puts truths about one's self, apparent as soon as expressed, in a way to dishearten.

'It does not matter after all. The day's headache has begun, and I must stop. That is worse than the "privy nip."

'It was really kind of you to tell me what Sir James Hannen said about my Essays. When I get better again, I shall be glad of any reassurance as to that book.'

[And again, on September 28 :]

'It is time, I think, to end the tedious scene. I am a failure in the one thing I have tried to do—literature. The way in which that book of Essays has been received shows this. Did you see the "P. M. G." ? It cannot be the mistake of so many people. It is my own fault; and I am old and stupid.'

[But it was not in the structure of Symonds's spirit to remain for long in this condition of depression, which, I think, was due quite as much to health as to reviews. The reaction soon began, and on October 18 he writes to Mr. Sidgwick :]

'I have overlived my interest in those two volumes of Essays, and do not care what the Press says. I think I made a mistake in supposing that I could do things of that sort well, and that I could acquire distinction by pruning off my personal proclivities toward certain kinds of rhetoric—perhaps the only point I had in literature. What do books matter in relation to the soul, when life is trembling in the balance, and the days and nights have no savour in them? Even so, I have love still, and am yours.'

[And a change to Venice clearly assisted the upward movement. From 560 Zattere, he writes to Mr. Gosse, on November 9 :]

'I left Davos this day fortnight, worn out with my long illness in that narrow valley (two months and three weeks just



sponged out of active and enjoyable existence). I have been here since, alone in my own little house, with Angelo and his wife to look after me, and a great many friends of different nations near. The change has been beneficial to nerves and brain ; but I am not myself yet. . . . Burton's death was a sad blow. Had I been able to get to Venice as early as I wished, I might have seen him again, for I was going to Trieste to stay with him. I had a heartrending letter from Lady Burton the other day. She says nothing about his books, papers, and immense collection of notes ; nor does his doctor, Baker, who has also written, give me a full account of his last hours. At Davos I feared such a catastrophe was inevitable. Baker told me he never left him for ten minutes together ; and as he spoke of gout, I suspected that the muscles of the heart must be affected.

‘ . . . My window here, where I write, is so charming : the whole *riva* of the Zattere and the canal of the Giudecca, in front, crowded with all kinds of craft, yellow and red sails, &c., leading on to the distant mainland and the Euganean Hills, behind which the sun sets. I am just above a bridge (it is an *entresol* I live in), up and down which go sailors of the marine, soldiers, fishermen, swaggering gondoliers. I can almost see their faces as they top the bridge ; by rising from the chair a little, I do so at once. A Princess Dolgorouki has a house next ours (across a canal or *rio*), which stands behind an old walled garden ; the trees of this garden, cypresses, maritime pines, olives, &c., make an excellent side foreground to the expansive water-view. . . .’

[To Mr. Sidgwick, from the same address, he wrote on November 27 this letter, in which the desire for work is felt once more, and Michael Angelo is mentioned for the first time :]

‘ You see I am in Italy : and to-day the whole of Venice is under snow. It looks like a bad imitation of Davos in July bad weather, while the ships along the canal of the Giudecca, seen from my windows, present the appearance of blurred illustrations to a book of Arctic exploration.

'I only came here yesterday. I have been staying in the Tuscan country, not far from Florence, with Mrs. Ross ; and then at Vescovana, near the Euganean Hills, with the Contessa Almorò Pisani.

'I can't say that these Italian "peregrinities" (as Carlyle calls such wanderings in "Sterling's Life") have done me much good. Three months of illness at Davos, continual fever, and a general disturbance of the whole system, including brain, lungs, and stomach, pulled me down terribly ; and I find at fifty that the recuperative force, with which I was once singularly gifted, is upon the wane. Thank God I have been brought to mortification, and now am willing to accept the advent of old age. I do not even hanker feverishly after Koch's miraculous lymph. If it be of any good, it comes for me too late, and I shall only regret it did not come when Janet first began to fade. But at present I suspend my judgment, and refuse to be sanguine for my fellow-sufferers.

'Ah, me ! what stuff Tolstoi has taken to write. "Work while ye have the light," says nothing toward instruction and edification. The "Kreutzer Sonata" is of course full of true things ; but you cannot eradicate sex from human nature.

'Publishers want me to write all sorts of things. I found three letters here yesterday : one clamouring for a little book on Boccaccio ; one offering me something like 500 guineas for a new grand "Life of Michael Angelo" ; the third suggesting that a prose version of the "Æneid" from my pen would be a certain success. If I were more elastic, I would bite at Michael Angelo, rewrite the history of Tuscan art, and illustrate my æsthetic principles by reference to that colossal manifestation of wayward force. But I do not know ; I want to sleep more than to think.'

1891 [In the winter of 1890-91, the 'Life of Michael Angelo' was definitely taken in hand, and carried on with all Symonds's wonted impetuosity. By March 6, he writes :]

'I have been working hard at 'Michael Angelo,' and have got through a great deal of preliminary business. The analysis of his correspondence taught me much about him.

‘You tell me I ought to come to Venice, and not to wring something out of my life here. But I do not think I should be better there. I like Davos quite as much as I do Venice, and far more, inasmuch as it has so far more enjoyable a climate. Still I shall not be sorry to get away into Italy—Tuscany, most likely—at the end of this month. This, because I have been a good deal bothered, as you know, here; and every place in which one does not live seems a rest.

‘The problem of life and self is not, however, to be solved by change of place. One place is as good as another for the soul, though some are far better for the body, and I find that the people in all places are equally attractive and almost equally annoying. On the whole, I am better satisfied with Graubünden than with any other region I have dwelt in. And that is good.

‘As I once wrote in a Sonnet,

It is the centre of the soul that ails.

‘Like you, if you are speaking truth, I do not know what *ennui* is. I know what a lot of other disagreeable states of the spirit are. But I never suffer from vacancy. Unsatisfied hungers of the heart are not *ennui*.

‘I have invested 2,400*l.* out of income in various ways since January 1. This business takes up some time and thought. But my old age and failing strength are what really fatigue me. Literature is but a side matter. I don’t do it as easily as I used to do—in some ways more carefully and conscientiously—but not with the same pleasure. I get numbers of letters now from strangers about my work. It seems that one must live to be old and rather indifferent to such things, before they come to one.’

[His correspondence was, indeed, becoming very voluminous and wide. His study of Michael Angelo brought him into touch with such German scholars as Von Scheffler, such Italians as Guido Biagi, such Englishmen as Professor Middleton. His interest in Walt Whitman opened to him a lively exchange of views with that poet’s admirers in America and

England. The younger generation of poets were sending him their volumes, and in the midst of his own studies he found time to write letters of warm encouragement like this which follows:]

‘I find it difficult to express all the feeling which your little book of poems has aroused in me to-night. I took it up, curious, expecting to find things rare in it; but I was not prepared for “infinite riches in a little room.” These, having rapidly read the book, I find there; and then I begin to meditate: why is it possible that I should not have discerned the book before, in all the nine years of its printed and published life? What is the function of the critical press, if it failed to force it on my vision and my sense of hearing? What spilt and waste of melody and genius must be going on, if these lyrics fail to arrest attention?’

‘Such, indeed, is the first tide of emotions roused by reading your poetry.

‘I am not going to pretend that I regard your poetry as very wide in range, and so forth, or to seek in it a philosophy of life, &c. I do not think it aims at that, or has it. But it is the real note of a really poetical, gifted, sensitive, and exquisitely cadenced individuality.

‘It is like the poetry of some of our most beloved Elizabethans; with a smack of the decade (or two decades) which produced it, a touch of Swinburne, a grace from the French, fused in the alembic of the writer’s self.

‘To-night I am bee-drunken with the harmless honey of your song. But if morning hours, and another reading, do not alter my opinion, I will send these unpremeditated words to you.

‘I should so much like to make an *étude* of your poems. But I am ignorant—I do not know whether they are not already far more widely known than I could make them known, and loved than I could teach men how to love them.

‘Tell me if you would like me to write what I think about their excellence—not dithyrambically, as here, but soberly as art requires. If you would, are you willing to tell me

something about yourself, and how your lyrics came out of your heart and life, and whether you go on writing still?

‘How I envy you your gift of rhythm, and inevitable melodic phrase. No, envy is not the word; but if God had given me that gift I could have said what I wanted, and what I must never say through want of magic.’

[There are certainly no signs of *ennui* in the following description of the way in which Symonds took relief from the strain of this constant application. To Mr. Gosse he wrote on February 23, 1891:]

‘. . . I have lost my power of living like an invalid. The constant effort of a lifetime to control my health and create the best conditions for repelling disease, has worn my faculties of endurance out. So I do things now which are not prudent. I drove yesterday to a village two hours away from here; attended a peasant theatre, which was tremendous fun; dined with three good companions, Swiss; and drove home at midnight in an open sledge under the most glorious moon and icy wind from the glaciers. This is not a cure for bronchitis. And again, to-day, I started with my girls and our toboggans, and ran a course of four miles, crashing at lightning speed over the snow and ice. We did the journey in about eleven minutes, and I came in breathless, dead-beat, almost fainting. Then home in the railway, with open windows and a mad crew of young men and maidens excited by this thrilling exercise. It was solemn and beautiful upon the run. The sun had set, but all the heavens were rosy with its after-glow, and the peaks and snowfields which surrounded us shone in every tone of crimson and saffron. Then from behind the vast black bulk of a mountain mass, the rising full moon swam rapidly upon our sight, a huge transpicuous dew-pearl of intensest green, bathed in the warm colours of the burning skies. People who summer in the Arctic circle describe these luminous effects. Our rapid motion through the celestial wonders and over the myriad-tinted snowpath, added an intoxicating glory to the vision—until, as we descended from the upper height, the splendours and the path we sped upon were swallowed up in



vast chasms of primeval pine-forests, whence we emerged again into the flooding silver of the moon, which at a lower level strove victoriously with the sunset-incandescence we had left behind. But this again was no cure for bronchitis. I have just supped at 11 P.M., and am writing to you with pipe in mouth before I turn into bed.'

[The intensely hard work on 'Michael Angelo,' which was carried on throughout the summer, strung Symonds up to a very high pitch of emotional speculation.]

'There<sup>1</sup> are some things in your last letter (June 30) which make me want to respond at once; and I hope this will follow you to England, and that you will think over a friend's word there. It is about the relation of passion to intellectual energy. You know how little I seek after fame, and how little I value the fame of famous men. You also know how much I value self-effectuation: how I deeply feel it to be the duty of a man to make the best of himself, to use his talents, to make his very defects serve as talents, and to be something for God's sake who made him. In other words, to play his own note in the universal symphony. We have not to ask whether other people will be affected by our written views of this or that. Though, for my part, I find now, with every day I live, that my written views have had a wide and penetrating influence where often least expected. That is no affair of mine, any more than of a sunflower to be yellow, or a butterfly to flutter. The point for us is to bring all parts of ourselves into vital correlation, so that we shall think nothing, write nothing, love nothing, but in relation to the central personality—the bringing of which into prominence is what is our destiny and duty in this short life. And my conclusion is that, in this one life, given to him on earth, it is the man's duty, as recompense to God who placed him here, or Nature, Mother of us all—and the man's highest pleasure, as a potent individuality—to bring all factors of his being into correspondence for the presentation of himself in something. Whether the world regards that

<sup>1</sup> To H. F. Brown, Davos, July 2, 1891.



final self-presentation of the man or not, seems to me just no matter. As Jenny Lind once said to me, "I sing to God," so, I say, let us sing to God. And for this end let us not allow ourselves to be submerged in passion, or our love to lapse in grubbery; but let us be human beings, horribly imperfect certainly, living for the best effectuation of themselves which they find possible. If all men and women lived like this, the symphony of humanity would be a splendid thing to listen to.

'I have been writing out of the heart's depth. And as Achilles says in Shakespeare—

My soul is troubled like a fountain stirred,  
And I myself see not the bottom of it.

'But, after all, dear friend, do not do what you seem inclined to do; do not let your intelligence imagine that any work you can produce is useless; do not delude your conscience with the seductive dream of becoming corrupt. Corruption is too terrible a Siren. Some part in us loves her so. You must keep your intelligence alive to its humble function, as a necessary energy for your own diurnal happiness. And you must make your conscience feel that, living for unselfish and no ignoble ends, you do not sink into corruption.

'At the end of the whole matter I say this :

'Brain work, whatever its value may be, is the best balance to passion; and passion, however despised it may be, is wholesome when it helps the man to will and labour with his mind.'

[Upon this grave note I should like to pause. Little remains to be said about Symonds's literary career, and that will be found in the following chapter. The success which his 'Life of Michael Angelo' immediately achieved was a source of great satisfaction to him, and his attention was being called to the execution of a scheme which had long lain in his head, a history of the Canton he knew so well. The death of Walt Whitman diverted him for a time to the composition of a study of the American poet who had exercised so strong an influence over his spiritual life. This study was published on the day that Symonds died in Rome. Here, then, at the close

of this chapter, is the proper place to insert Symonds's own estimate of the ultimate results of his literary career upon himself as a man.]

I<sup>1</sup> have often endeavoured to formulate my conception of the influence, physical and moral, which this literary work, prolonged for a quarter of a century, exerted over me. In the first place, it greatly contributed to enjoyment, since it gave me that pleasure and exhilaration which is the concomitant of any energy unimpaired in its exercise. I always liked writing, and never disliked reading. In the second place, it afforded me an occupation which could be carried on with more or less convenience under the peculiar conditions of my unsettled life. Had I not already formed myself for literature, when I was compelled to settle at Davos Platz in 1877, I doubt whether I should have even partially recovered health. The habit of writing rendered me independent, and sustained my spirits under circumstances which would have been unutterably depressing to a barrister or merchant checked in his career. In the third place, it brought me a fair amount of distinction, and a certain kind of consideration. Without being ambitious or over-valuing the sort of reputation I have gained, I am not insensible to this advantage.

On the other hand, I cannot pretend to think that literature, in the way I have pursued it, is exactly wholesome for a man of my peculiar temperament. '*Travailler pour la gloire,*' says George Sand, '*est un rôle d'empereur ou le métier d'un forçat.*' I have never indeed laboured for glory, because I have always thought less of results than of pleasurable exercise and innocent pastime. Yet study and composition are none the less exhausting to the nerves, when taken from this point of view, than when a man is consciously ambitious. Often I have felt myself as tired and worn with writing 'as the tanned galley-slave is with his oar.' Reaction follows, and the fatigue of labour craves the distraction of amusement. The subjects with which I have been occupied—Greek poetry, Italian culture in one of the most lawless periods of modern

<sup>1</sup> Autobiography.

history, beauty in nature and the human form—stimulate the imagination. They excite cravings which cannot be satisfied by simple pleasures. Long after work is over, the little ocean of the soul is agitated by a ground-swell. The pulses beat, the nerves thrill and tingle. For any one who may have read my sonnets in ‘Animi Figura’ and ‘Vagabunduli Libellus,’ this state of the emotions needs no further exposition.

It may be questioned whether the pursuit of literature—as that mode of life which secures its end by employing energy and occupying leisure agreeably to the individual—renders a man really happy. Literature takes a second place in my estimation, and for this reason, although I have persevered in it for solace and escape from fretting care, I have never been able to regard it very seriously. In a certain sense I do not condemn this habit of mind. It enables a man to keep in view the truth that literature exists for life, not life for literature—a truth which less half-hearted men of letters do not sufficiently recognise. It delivers him from the conceit of authorship by constantly reminding him how trivial any literary successes and achievements are in comparison with the solid good things of a comely and contented existence; how little talent, or even genius, weighs in the scale against character, strength of will, goodness, and tranquillity of mind; how men ought really to be reckoned, not by what they think, or write, or create in art, but by what they are and what they have enjoyed. This attitude, however, is not without counterbalancing disadvantages. It precludes that centralising force of enthusiasm which springs from self-dedication to a single great conception. The literary *viveur* cannot hope to become a scholar or to produce a monumental work. In so far as he shares the scientific spirit of our age—in so far as he is sensible of possessing faculties above the average, and is open to the animating ideas of the modern world—he will have to endure a life-long recurrent regret for sterner paths abandoned, and for nobler triumphs carelessly foregone.

It were a thesis worthy of discussion whether the scholar—such a scholar as Mark Pattison idealised, and Robert Browning sung in ‘A Grammarian’s Funeral’—be happier and more

useful than the man of letters I have been describing. The former may loom more largely on the mists of time, unless he fritter his force away as Wolf did. But in order to feel at his life's end that he has fulfilled the whole duties of a man, he must possess the felicitous and self-complacent nature of a Gibbon. Otherwise he runs the risk of awaking too late to the consciousness of Goethe's 'Faust,' that knowledge is but vanity, and that the best fruits of the tree of life have never been plucked :

Grau, theurer Freund, ist alle Theorie,  
Und grün des Lebens goldner Baum.

Then he exclaims, like Louis Bouilhet, on his death-bed :

Une voix dit, une voix lamentable :  
'Je suis ton cœur, et je n'ai pas aimé.'

Or, like Michael Angelo, reviewing the past years expended in self-consecration to the noblest service of the sublimest art, he sighs :—

Now know I well how that fond phantasy,  
Which made my soul the worshipper and thrall  
Of earthly art, is vain.

The exclusive pursuit of science, of scholarship, of art, leaves some portion of a man's nature unemployed and unsatisfied. When the doleful days arrive, the days of spent creative powers and waning energy, those unexpended elements of his nature awake from slumber. They are still young, because they have remained unexercised ; but it is now too late for them to expand within the crumbling palace of man's mortal frame. If he is sanguine, he exclaims : 'Other heights in other lives, God willing.' If he inclines to hopelessness, he meditates the end of Ecclesiastes, and embitters the evening of life with regret more poignant than that we feel for a renounced ideal. I speak only of the more generous souls. There are men enough who placidly believe they could not have been better than they are—simply because they are themselves. But this egotism is vanity ; vanity more ignoble even than the

vanity of regretting misused opportunities of enjoyment or abandoned paths of heroical ambition.

Who shall be contented with his life when he looks back upon it?

It is not possible upon this path or that to satisfy the insatiable within the mind. That is the frank-pledge of the soul's infinity—if not of personal immortality. It were as easy to drink the ocean up as to exhaust man's capacity for curiosity and desire for enjoyment. Therefore the only contentment we dare hope for here is that which comes from being satisfied with limitation and inured to imperfection. From this point of view it signifies extremely little at our life's end whether we have been a Virgil, a Titian, a Gibbon, or a literary *viveur*. In the scheme of the universe all sorts and conditions of men have their inevitable place. Nothing is known to us about their relative importance or the issue of their activities.

## CHAPTER XVII

## THE END

The 'Life of Michael Angelo'—Journeys entailed by it—The book finished—'Our Life in the Swiss Highlands'—Decline in strength—Leaves Davos—'*Lontan lontano*'—The last journey—Illness and death in Rome—Funeral—Epitaph.

- 1891 [THE 'Life of Michael Angelo' employed the whole of the year 1891, and part of 1892. It entailed journeys through the Casentino, and to Rome and Florence for the study of works of art, or the examination of documents. Symonds's Venetian servant was with him on most of these expeditions, of which he sent some account to H. F. Brown:]

'Angelo<sup>1</sup> and I arrived here to-day, after making a very good journey in spite of mixed weather, something trying by reason of scirocco.

'We saw a good part of the Casentino: Poppi, a thoroughly grand old Tuscan eyrie (of the Conti Guidi), and Bibbiena, a milder hill-set city, where the inn is kept by the Fratelli Amorosi, and the wine is "Tuscan Burgundy." We drove over the most breakneck roads to La Vernia, and then rode to Chiusi and Caprese (Michael Angelo's birthplace) on the watershed of Arno and Tiber, a ride of five and a half hard hours over stones and through cataracts. Of course we visited the *sacri luoghi* of S. Francis, and spent the night in a filthy charming inn, crooning over the open kitchen fire with *contadini* working their way to a distant market.

'After this Orvieto, and its sense of ancient wickedness.

<sup>1</sup> To H. F. Brown. Rome, Oct. 29, 1891.



I wonder why that place has such a strong moral pungency, for me at least. And why Signorelli dominates my imagination so cruelly.

‘Next, by Orte and Terni, into the very heart of hearts of Apennines, to Aquila below the Gran Sasso d’Italia. They are ugly mountains, with no grace but that of rarely manifested atmospheric charm. Still Aquila is worth a long journey. It has great character, and some unexpected beauties of art. The main thing there was Ulrichs. I spent a whole afternoon and evening in his company. Ulrichs is *Chrysostomos* to the last degree, sweet, noble, a true gentleman and man of genius. He must have been at one time a man of singular personal distinction, so finely cut are his features, and so grand the lines of his skull.

‘I left Aquila yesterday for Sulmona (Ovid’s birthplace), a dirty place, hardly worth a visit, except for its position among those heartless and prosaic Apennines. Repellent, stupid mountains at the best; at the worst, abominably mediocre and vulgar. I have travelled just now through so many hundred miles of them that I may abuse them with knowledge. Below Umbria, I do not see any good in them at all; and the people are ugly—loud—like the twangle, wrangle, jangle music of the shallow South.

‘To-day we came in seven hours from Sulmona to Rome, passing through Tagliacozzo (memorable historic name, but nothing else), and Tivoli, into the sullen Roman Campagna, all indigo and Venetian red, under a heavy cold sky of imminent rain. I found your letters here.

‘I expect to stay in Rome long enough to see the principal things of M. A. B. again with care, and if possible to examine the codex of his poems in the Vatican Library. This big Americano-Germanico cosmopolitan *caravanserai*, with an English Bible in each bedroom, does not please me. In fact, it is just what I loathe, and brings out the worst side of my temper. I had a bitter passage of wordy arms with a patronising polyglot head-waiter just now, while eating a fifteen francs dinner *à la carte*. It was about a bottle of wine, which I had not ordered, and he thought fit to bring instead of the one

I chose. "*Satis et super satis.*" But you know how nasty I can be in my mood, and how I regret it afterwards.

'Probably I shall go to Carrara from here, and then again to Florence, Poggio Gherardo. Tell Ronald Gower where I am, and write to me here once again, if you feel the impulse—if not, to Poggio Gherardo, to wait for me. After that I hope to come to Venice.

'You know, perhaps, that Jowett is very ill? My sister, Mrs. Green, is nursing him in Balliol. She writes me (a letter I found here) that the prospects are almost hopeless.

'Once at Aquila, again at Sulmona, I had the deepest strangest dreams of him, in which he came to me, and was quite glorified, and spoke to me so sweetly and kindly—as though he understood some ancient wrong he had not fathomed in me before, and blessed me and made me feel that this and all else would be right.

'I cannot say that I have been much occupied with the thought of him, though I knew him to be ill. M. A. B., and the places I saw for the first time, absorbed my energies and sympathies. Still, these two dreams have haunted me with a sense of atonement and softness. I am deeply touched to find by my sister's letter how near to death he was when she wrote.'

'You<sup>1</sup> are having the same change of weather as we are. It is very mild. At the same time it is well that I am here. Davos is safer than Venice, and I have had a sharp warning. I have not been out of doors since I arrived last Saturday. The time is spent oddly enough. I begin work at 9.30, and go on till 12.30. After lunch, at 2.30, I go to bed and sleep two hours; have tea in bed and talk to my wife. Dine at 6.30. Begin work again at 8 P.M., and go on with it till 1 or 2 A.M. Then to bed and sleep again.

'I have written one difficult chapter since I came here, upon the Sistine and M. A. B.'s design—conception of form in general. Of course I had brooded over this during my Italian journey. Now I am tackling his architectural work at S. Lorenzo and the Medicean sacristy.

<sup>1</sup> To H. F. Brown. Davos, Nov. 20, 1891.

‘Madge acts as my secretary all the forenoon. She copies out the quotations and translations from Mab’s letters. Ronald always calls him “Mab,” and Angelo calls him “Il suo Vecio.”’<sup>1</sup> She is getting through all the chapters under my direction, and I think she really likes the work.

‘There will really be very little of importance to do when this last æsthetic chapter and the copying are finished. The routine suits my health. I feel already to be better, with more power of breathing in the lungs.’

[In the following letter Symonds records the effect of finishing such a laborious piece of work as Michael Angelo’s *Life* had been to him:]

‘The<sup>2</sup> abrupt finish,’ he says, ‘of my M. A. B. work is rather trying to my nerves. How can a writer escape from being neurotic? He has such tremendous changes of mental climate and revulsions of emotion. He is always vehemently growing or being violently amputated, and he is not a vine, to suffer these alternatives in the due course of natural seasons. If genius is connected with insanity, this must be due in many cases, not merely to a congenital diathesis, but also to the abnormal vibrations set up in the nervous system of an author by the conditions of his labour. A pendulum has rhythmic action, so long as the motive force lasts, but here the creative rhythm is suddenly suspended, just when the nervous energy is over-stimulated to its utmost. I feel the fact acutely at the present moment, and am tingling, jumping.

‘The only way out is to begin some new work. But how exhausting all that is to vital resources.’

‘. . . The Blacks of Edinburgh, meanwhile, are going to publish Madge’s and my book on our life here, and Nutt is going to publish a volume of Poems and Translations by me. In spite of spiritual bankruptcy, it seems, then, that the first people I offer a book to, take it without questioning. It is likely, then, that if I live during the next six months, I shall

<sup>1</sup> ‘Vecio,’ Venetian for ‘Vecchio’: ‘your old man.’

<sup>2</sup> To H. F. Brown, Davos, Dec. 10, 1891.

be engaged in printing three books—M. A. B., *Life in the Swiss Highlands*, *Verses*. . . .

‘So I sit groaning on this awful night’s glacier, thirty degrees below zero.

‘Life of the Universe, God, everlasting Law, from which no soul can flinch, soon must I go back to you, bruised, maimed, afflicted in my sense of dwarfdom. My hope is that you made me thus, and that I play a part in the unknown drama. Blind and stupid, like a cockchafer, I have buzzed in crepuscule. Brain and heart, with all their light and heat in me, are inefficient. Yet I have striven in my own gross way. And, after all, a man may be tested by strife, even though he feels at life’s ending that strife is only one line, and not the finest line of action.’

1892

[The ‘Life of Michael Angelo,’ written as it had been at a very high pressure, was a strain too severe for Symonds’s reduced vitality. I do not think he ever properly recovered from it. In February he complains of ‘fainting or falling fits.’ ‘I have been very ill.’ He was in England in the summer of 1892, paid many visits, saw many friends, enjoyed it all with that power of keen enjoyment which was so characteristic of his external life. But his letters of this year are full of phrases which show that he himself took no sanguine view of his health. ‘The way in which my nerves, as well as lungs, have been attacked looks like influenza; but, on the whole, I think it is a reaction from M. A. B.’ He complains too of fainting fits, and numbness in the brain. ‘Literature has pretty well come to an end with me. It loses its attractiveness, and I feel threadbare. Fate has made me much too young to grow old properly.’ ‘I am writing in my study on a cold morning, before the sun has climbed the Jacobshorn. Out there—in the void infinite, the unexplored, intangible—what is to become of a soul so untamably young in its old ruined body, consuming its last drop of vital oil with the flame of beauty?’ His life closes as it began, with a question, an interrogation flung out from the Self, the Soul, to the Universe, God.

The farewell to Clifton had been taken on a note of music

—the singing boy and girl: the farewell to Davos also (an unconscious farewell, it is true) was conveyed upon a note of music, wherein the spirit which had so persistently scrutinised the limits of this life seemed now to discern, not far away, the opening portals of a wider universe, the promise of a larger existence as the region of its ceaseless quest.]

‘ . . . Last<sup>1</sup> Sunday night, I was lying awake, thinking of death, desiring death; when, lost in this sombre mood, to me the bedroom was at a moment filled with music—the “Lontan lontano,” from Boito’s “Mefistofele,” together with its harp accompaniment.

“Lontan lontano” has not yet left my auditory sense—stays behind all other sensations—seems to indicate a vague and infinite, yet very near . . . ’

[A few days after writing this presentient passage, Symonds and his daughter Margaret left Davos for Venice, whence they started upon a journey of which Miss Symonds says:]

‘The spring of 1893 was cold and wet. We left Davos earlier than usual, and plunged straight down into the extreme south of Italy. Instead of finding the climate milder there, it was, as is often the case, even chillier than the frozen snow-fields of the Alps. The country which we visited was all unknown to my father, and with his usual indomitable energy he explored it thoroughly. He was interested in the strange architecture of the churches; he went into their crypts and round their choirs, regardless of the icy and almost deathly chill which lingered there. At night he walked through the streets of Taranto, Bari, and of Naples, when it would have been well to linger by the side of a hot pine fire. He always said that new places were best seen and understood at night—that the truest impression of a city could be gained by the light of its gaslights, or under the moon. He was always a delicate, almost a fragile, human being, but he drew upon his scanty store of physical strength in a way which the most

<sup>1</sup> To H. F. Brown. Davos, February 22, 1893.

robust would shrink from ; and during that last journey, although conscious himself of a certain increasing weakness, he ran risks which were often excessive, and used his time and eyes to see the very utmost of the new sights round about him.

‘Indeed, I had the sort of impression that we were running a race. It was a splendid race—there were beautiful things by the way. Leaving Venice on March 21, we went straight down the whole length of Italy by the express train to Bari, and thence the next day to Sir James Lacaita’s place outside Taranto. Of this journey my father wrote an account, which was published in the “Fortnightly” for October 1893. Spring was scarcely awakened in the land, but there was a strange shimmer of buds and blossoms in all the country round the barren, Eastern-looking towns. The asphodels were out in millions. There were fields quite filled with these flowers amidst the olive yards of Leucaspide. My father delighted in them. He would select the tallest spike which he could see, pick it, and carry it with him on his walk. He was always interested in every sort of thing which grew. He procured a big pickaxe (for spades did not exist at Leucaspide), and went into the fields with Angelo to hoe up the bulbs of huge white squills, anemones, and irises, which he packed and sent to a friend in the North of Italy. At night he joined the pizzica dance, and danced it as vigorously as any of the vigorous natives.

‘From Taranto we journeyed straight to Salerno. The weather continued fine, but intensely cold. All day the sun shone brightly, but the wind whirled through the streets and crept through the windows and round the passages of the ramshackle old palace which was our inn. We called this inn the Cave of Care, and were glad to leave it two days later ; but from its inhospitable roof we escaped upon two glorious and happy expeditions. The first of these was to Pæstum. It was a real spring day, and warm at last. The sun blazed fiercely, and the whole earth seemed to throb with the first strong pulse of heat. My father was very happy, and interested in working out once more some old theory of his about the roofing in of the temples. The lizards all came out and



whisked across the yellow baking stones, amongst a tangle of pale periwinkles, orchises, and small white lilies. Far away, and framed between the golden pillars of the temples, we saw the sea glittering like glass. It was hard to tear oneself away in time to catch the little bustling train, and with the full remembrance of those groves of roses which formerly had scented all the air round Pæstum's temples, to be dragged in a stuffy carriage across the desolate marshes where buffaloes were grazing. A German gentleman sat opposite to us. He had stolen a fragment of the Temple of Neptune, and wrapped it up in his old plaid shawl. I shall not forget my father's expression as he realised this scene—it was one of delighted humour rather than of disgust. This strong and never failing sense of humour was one of the things which made my father so delightful a companion both on journeys and at home.

‘The next day we drove along the coast to Amalfi, and the next we went to Naples. We stayed five days in Naples; the weather continued fine and cold—so cold that we did not go out to the islands. Most of our mornings were spent in the museum, and one afternoon we sailed in the bay. There was a very high wind, and our boatman was young and reckless. He put in to shore too quick, and did not calculate the force or the way of the wind. We were just under the rocks, and must inevitably have capsized, had it not been for the prompt skill of my father, who caught the flying sail, and pulled it down at the very instant when we were heaving over. One day we went up Vesuvius. It was fine, the fields were full of lovely flowers, little blue lupins and lilies, and all the copses flushed with pink and yellow; but when we got to the station the mist and smoke came down in a black cloud from the summit, shutting out the sunlight, so my father did not attempt the last ascent. He said he thought that Michael Angelo must have studied the figures for his “Last Judgment” on the slopes of Vesuvius—that he saw distinctly a tangle of writhing human forms within the lava.

‘From Naples we journeyed straight to Rome. It was April, but Vesuvius was deep in snow, right down to the first vineyards. As we came through the hills above Rome the air

felt warm and still, and the vision of sunset over the city and over the Campagna was gorgeous indeed. The whole valley of the Tiber was flooded with a seething golden light; only the dome of St. Peter's stood up black and distinct, and framed in the burning globe of the sun as it rested on the horizon. In the immediate foreground great aqueducts, purple and black, rose up like things seen in one's dreams. My father was deeply impressed by this spectacle. He was strangely strung up, and very full of nervous vigour—yet he was coming to Rome to die.

'Rome was in a state of indescribable commotion. The German Emperor, and many other royalties, were expected, and the grand fêtes to celebrate the silver wedding of the King and Queen of Italy were all in preparation. Every hotel was crowded, and it was almost impossible to get rooms. After some delay, however, we got good rooms, at the top of the Hotel d'Italia, five stories up, where the air felt fresh and pure; but by that time I think that my father had already taken the illness which finally killed him. There was a great deal of influenza in Rome, and there had been cases of it in the hotel. He did not, however, think of resting—he always went on working and learning to the very last. He found many friends in Rome, and was forced to accept several invitations. He took me to the Vatican, St. Peter's, and many galleries. To the Corsini Palace, I remember that we went on purpose to see Albert Dürer's "Rabbit," a sketch which had always delighted my father. His mind seemed more than usually clear on those days; his conversation was brilliant and sparkling above the average. It was, as I have said before, as though he were running a race with life. He loved life, and he never ceased to *live* it while it lasted. On Friday afternoon we drove out with the C——'s along the Appian Way, and looking to the hills my father spoke of the places we would visit there after we left Rome.

'On Saturday afternoon we drove to the Palatine Hill. The heat had really set in, the air seemed to be thawing, and warming itself through. A splendid bath of sunlight poured down upon the waving grasses, the poppies, and tall spikes of

golden fennel. My father was full of energy. We wandered about the dusty ruins, and climbed high up upon the colossal walls and immemorial rubbish heaps. We left the beaten track, and pushing through a thicket of arbutus shrub, we emerged upon a sort of arête or spine of ruined wall, which overhung the race-course they were digging out. It was a giddy place, extremely wild and beautiful. Rare plants of the wild mignonette grew below us on the crumbling rags of turf and brickwork. The old boyish spirit of adventure was engrafted deep down in my father's nature. He loved the wild mignonette as he had loved the wallflowers on the cliffs at Clifton. I remember holding tight to his coat as he bent forward to gather the yellow spikes of flower. He was happy and excited. He always loved and sought adventure as keenly as any of his children.

'The next day, Sunday, we drove out early round the gardens of the Trastevere. We went into the church of S. Onofrio. There my father found the tomb of a cardinal, with an inscription which greatly pleased him. It ran thus: "Labor et gloria vita fuit, mors requies." He read it over several times, and said that when he died he would like a thing like that to be written upon his grave. He told me much about Tasso, and how the old poet, broken in spirit and in health, and sick with the strife of living, had come one evening, out of the rush of the city, to die in the convent on this hill. My father was always anxious to gather together both the past, the present, and the general meaning of everything he saw. He stopped the carriage to point out to me some of the peculiar points which went to produce the essential charm of Rome. He showed me that it was the breadth of sky, the quality of the air, and, above all, the Campagna and the hills, and *not* the buildings, which make the city beautiful. It was a very hot morning. The hills rose up, so sharp, so clear, that you could trace their slightest folds. An extraordinary blue grey haze fell through the sky. There was a tall Judas tree in the immediate foreground of the panorama; its branches were all studded and aflame with purple flowers. A plant of wisteria had grown around its root, and, climbing up the trunk, it

wreathed itself and fell in pale festoons of lilac blossoms from the branches of the purple Judas tree. This extraordinary combination of colour, backed by the blue of the sky, interested my father immensely. It amused him. He laughed at it, and he walked up and down, wondering whether it would be possible to paint it right in a picture, for it was both wrong and right in nature. As usual, he had a bit of new literature in his pocket, the MS. roll of a set of poems received from a friend that day. He read them eagerly; these tokens of confidence and friendship were always the source of extreme, almost childlike, pleasure to him. We went back to lunch with the P——'s in their beautiful palazzo on the Corso. After lunch we drove round the gardens of the Pincio. To his great joy my father saw a large bush of the yellow-berried ivy, a plant which had always had a peculiar charm for him. He pointed out the golden ivy; it pleased him, but he was feeling ill then, and when he got back to the inn he went to bed. He never got up again.

'That was Sunday evening. On Monday his cold was worse, and his throat very bad—almost a form of diphtheria. In the evening his old Harrow friend, Mr. Corbett, came to see him. They talked a good deal. My father was bright, interested, insisting on accuracy as always, but very tired; and the night was bad. He suffered most from want of breath. With his weak lungs he could not breathe in the clammy Roman night air, and in Rome it was impossible for him to overcome an illness, which in itself need not have been fatal. The place suffocated him. At night the air was damp and chill; at dawn a thick white mist rose up round the roofs of the houses. It seemed as though the interminable deaths of all Rome's history rose with the dawn to crush the living city. And all day and all night the troops and the country people poured in through the streets like an army. There was no rest. If my father could but have been taken straight away then, even into the hills, he might perhaps have recovered; but it is not given us to foresee.

'On Monday afternoon his mind began to wander very slightly. When the doctor came in the evening, he talked

to my father about his books: then, half in jest, he turned and said, "Your father is already immortal." No one knew how ill he was, but I think he knew it himself. On Tuesday afternoon he gave me a little letter which he had written to my mother. His hand was very weak. He had drawn his three trefoils over the envelope for a seal. He was always neat—he never forgot to finish anything. I think he did not suffer actual pain, but his throat was very much swollen, and it was impossible for him to eat or drink. The heat was increasing, the days were long and noisy. He had a big airy room, and a good English nun came to nurse him on Tuesday afternoon. We read to him, but although he seemed to like the voice, he could not follow the words. He asked for the small book of prayers which he always had kept near him since he was a child, and which had belonged to his mother. This he had with him till he died.

‘He never once complained either of the heat or the noise, or of his own terrible weariness. He talked quietly and incessantly to himself. He seemed to be wandering back through the *thoughts*, not the experience of his old life. His body was exhausted, but his mind, though detached from the present surroundings, was strangely strung. Though delirious with fever, he maintained that extraordinary command over his brain, which only years of protracted suffering can procure. He thanked us very gently when we gave him anything. My father was one of those people whom it is a joy to serve.

‘On Wednesday morning we saw that he was dying. Another doctor came, and everything was done which could be done, but he himself wanted to rest. His throat was well then, but pneumonia had set in, attacking both lungs, and leading to paralysis of them and of the heart. He sank very gently, talking always to himself, but in a voice so low and weak I could not catch the words. Only I felt certain that he was happy and content, and very glad to rest. He had worked hard—harder than most mortals—and against terrible odds; but always he worked in the heat and in the cold of life. The nearer he came to death, the younger he seemed to grow. The look of extreme youth which came into his face during the last



hour of his life was literally extraordinary. Apart from the smoothing of the lines, the head was that of a very young man, almost of a boy. Towards midday he changed his bed. He was terribly tired ; he only wanted to be cool and to sleep. I put my arm round him to hold him up, for he could not breathe, and soon his head fell back against my shoulder. His eyes were shut as though he really slept, and there was a strange sweet smile around his mouth.

‘He died in the very heat and the height of the spring-day. There was no cloud in all the sky. The sun blazed passionately above the roofs of Rome, as his spirit went out through the open window, out into the Light which he had loved so well, which he had always striven to reach, to which he now belonged.

‘Rome was in an uproar all that day, but the penetrating peace of eternity was stamped upon my father’s quiet face ; and so deep and so profound was his repose, that those who loved him best dared not regret for his sake. Matthew Arnold’s lines, written about Clough, who died in Florence much in the same way, ring in my head as I think of that last hour of his life :

Why faintest thou ? I wandered till I died ;  
Roam on ! the light we sought is shining still.

. . . . .

‘It was a strange coincidence, and one which would have pleased my father well, that the first person who brought some flowers to put beside him was one of his Swiss friends, the porter of the hotel. Soon after my father’s death he came up to the room with a big bunch of Roman lilacs to put by his English friend. He was a great strong man, bred in the heart of the Graubünden mountains. His sorrow was very genuine ; he knew quite well what this death would mean, not only to himself, but to all his people at home. Large wreaths of rare and beautiful flowers, sent by Romans and by English people, who loved my father chiefly through his books, followed through the day, but none of those were as sweet a token of friendship for the dead man as that bunch of purple lilacs put in



his arms by the strong Swiss mountaineer, who had probably never heard of his writings, but who loved him for himself.

‘In the afternoon I went out to the Protestant Cemetery to choose a place for my father. The whole air seemed to sing with Shelley’s immortal lines on Adonais. It was April. The grass and the graves were full of flowers, and the birds sang and twittered in the cypress trees above them. They gave us a little piece of ground close to the spot where Shelley lies buried. In all the world there surely is no place more penetrated with the powers of poetry and of natural beauty.

‘Rome seemed half mad with rejoicings and revelry all that night. There was a thunder and a buzz of fireworks up on the Capitol, and the whole air felt electrified with lights, with music, and noises. Little lamps were hung round the shrines in the streets, and red lights blazed upon the cornices of Pagan temples. But something of the cool of the night crept down from the sky and into the room where my father lay.

‘His own faith was so large, so broad. He had thirsted for knowledge and space. It seemed as though his spirit were already far away upon the paths he longed in life to tread, and it was good to remember that, in passing into the Infinite, it had gone straight over the City of Rome, and that his last days had been lived amongst the sights and places which were dear to him.’

[A friend who reached Rome too late to find Symonds alive, sent the following account of his funeral to Mr. Dakyns :—‘I left for Rome by the first train which started on Wednesday morning. When I got there, past midnight, Angelo took me back from the station to the hotel, and we went upstairs. Johnnie’s face was very quiet and beautiful, especially about the forehead. The window was open, and the hot damp air of the city crept into the room. At 3 A.M. the men came. Angelo and I helped to lift him. He was as light as a feather. Then we two went down, and in an open cab we followed the hearse all across dark and dreaming Rome to the cemetery of Caius Cestius. I think that was his real funeral, and that he would have liked it. Dawn was beginning to whiten the sky over the

Aventine as we reached the cemetery gates. Some birds twittered in the cypress trees. We followed him to the mortuary chapel. As we drove back, low white mists wavered close along the ground, and the day began to make itself fully felt through the arches of the Colosseum. Mrs. Symonds and Lotta arrived by the night train. Dr. Munthe embalmed the body; and so the funeral could be delayed till Mrs. Green arrived. It took place at 4 P.M. on Saturday. The grave is within a pace of Trelawney's, and a hand touch of Shelley's *Cor Cordium*, in the embrasure of the ancient city walls. The coffin was covered with masses of purple irises and other flowers. The sun shone most brilliantly, and the birds sang in jubilation.'

On the grave is carved the following epitaph, written by Mr. Jowett:

INFRA JACET

JOHANNES ADDINGTON SYMONDS

VIR LUMINIBUS INGENII MULTIS

ET INDUSTRIÂ SINGULARI,

CUJUS ANIMUS

INFIRMO LICET IN CORPORE

LITERARUM ET HISTORIÆ STUDIO ARDEBAT.

BRISTOLII NATUS V. OCT. MDCCCXL.

REQUIEVIT IN CHRISTO XIX AP. MDCCCXCIII.

---

AVE CARISSIME

NEMO TE MAGIS IN CORDE AMICOS FOVEBAT

NEC IN SIMPLICES ET INDOCTOS BENEVOLENTIOR ERAT.

And below is Symonds's own translation of Cleanthes's hymn—

Lead thou me, God, Law, Reason, Motion, Life,  
 All names for Thee alike are vain and hollow:  
 Lead me, for I will follow without strife,  
 Or if I strive, still must I blindly follow!

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